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Abstract

Princeton University is unique in many ways, not the least of which is its eating club system. As an outlet for meals, studying, socializing and events for their Junior and Senior members and ubiquitous social life for all years of students, these clubs play many roles and affect many aspects of students' lives. In this project, I look through the broad lenses of gender and exclusionary spaces to explore students' experiences in the clubs. I combine my own involvement in participant-observation field research with personal interviews and a general survey to collect rich qualitative data about individuals as well as quantitative information. My scope is small with the intention of providing a deep look into this world rather than providing broad statistical data. The clubs provide an experience that despite its singularity reveals potential insights about the changing landscape of gender, institutionalization, stratification, and social interactions in contemporary America.

After describing the purpose and history of the clubs, I spend a large portion of this thesis describing in detail the actual happenings of the clubs, from day to day activities to exceptional formal events. This rich description is then followed by a broader discussion of the role of gender, exclusionary policies, and formal spatial controls. My findings revolve around the prevailing attitudes of the Princeton undergraduate population about these clubs as revealed in and by individual experiences and discussions.

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Research Methods

As the primary goal of my research was to give a simple preliminary glimpse into the social world and experiences of eating clubs, I prioritized depth of experience over volume of subject participants. This study does not claim to have a representative voice from every club on the street, nor does it claim to have a large enough sample to apply the experiences described in and results discovered by this project to the entire student body. Rather, my goal was to discover in a holistic sense what these social spaces are, what they represent, and how they are experienced on a personal level.

My primary research method for this project was ethnography, mainly participant observation. Incidentally my research began in May 2012 and purposefully in September 2014. During 2014 and 2015 my research also included field notes and photographs. My personal experience through these years was in visiting my boyfriend, a Princeton student and eating club member. Since this study's somewhat unintentional beginning was in 2012, my first undergraduate year at UNC, I went through a process of intense curiosity about and proceeding familiarization with eating clubs that somewhat paralleled those of Princeton students, albeit much less completely. My ethnographic limitations are in some sense obvious, but I will try to list the primary obstacles that prevent me from having a fully emic perspective. Though I have attended some of the clubs' parties when they are 'open,' I have certainly not been inside every club, and these parties were not my primary social life in college. In terms of sexuality, gender roles, and promiscuity, my perspective on the pressures for women is somewhat limited in the sense that I was in a socially marked monogamous, heterosexual relationship that was respected by the peers with whom I interacted. This detail is important in social interactions, as it largely precluded me from being approached by potentially interested peers or from participating in any

sexual interactions with strangers or acquaintances. Furthermore, in February 2013, my peer group and personal friends went through the process of joining (or not) eating clubs, which greatly concentrated my experiences into just two or three clubs. In February 2014, my boyfriend and other close friends became officers in their club, which simultaneously narrowed my personal experience but deepened the level of insider information and access I gained. The details of how these social changes altered my access are significant both in their variety over time and the increasing limitations they placed on my positionality.

For the purpose of this project, I began observing interactions within anthropological and other scholarly frameworks during a trip to Princeton on September 9th-15th, 2014. After receiving IRB approval, I began to take field notes and conduct interviews on trips for observational ethnography on three separate occasions: November 2014, December 2014, and February 2015. This participant-observation fieldwork is the basis for the majority of the writing in this project, as much of it is description of the events and interactions that I witnessed and took part in.

I conducted interviews with Princeton undergraduates and alumni to collect open-ended, qualitative responses and to gather inside perspectives of the various experiences students have in and about the clubs from freshman to senior year. I conducted in-person, skype, and internet correspondence interviews with respondents such as graduate board members, alumni, Princeton students, and out-of-town visitors. The structure of these interviews was largely open-ended, so each varied based on the individuals' experiences, role in the eating club system, and passions around specific topics or issues that I raised. The template for the formal conversational interviews (the list of IRB approved questions) can be found in Appendix 1. The interviews were conducted with the condition that the consultant remain anonymous, and are denoted throughout

the project with a “W” indicating woman or “M” indicating man (primarily because all of my interviewees identified as one or the other) and an identification number.

Finally, I devised an online Qualtrics survey to circulate to Princeton undergraduates and alumni in October-December 2014. The purpose of this survey was to broaden the reach of my study and collect data about trends of opinions concerning gender, exclusivity, and the role of eating clubs in Princeton social life. To maximize response completion, the vast majority of the questions were simple ratings or multiple-choice rather than open ended. This proved successful in gathering broader data about how different categories of people (club members, non-members of clubs, underclassmen) feel about the various topics this project focuses on. The survey asked a different set of questions to each participant based on their self-identified category. For example, non-members were asked questions about why they are not in an eating club, members were asked questions about their own clubs, and underclassmen were asked about their plans to join clubs. I circulated the link to the survey primarily through personal Facebook messages and emails, and by asking a few key acquaintances to post and share the link with other Princeton students. While approaching people through my personal relationships no doubt skewed the data toward membership in specific clubs, it also allowed me to reach out to particular students whom I knew had chosen specifically not to join clubs. Furthermore, this manner of circulation allowed me to have a very high response rate for the number of people with whom the link was shared.

In order to test the assertions and conclusions of this study, a larger sample size is needed, especially one that systematically addresses details of each club. I also feel it would be helpful to have the resources and information access needed to compile data on leadership and membership in all of the clubs throughout their histories. There are several topics that I gathered preliminary information on and that deserve extensive discussion, but the limitations of this

project unfortunately prevent me from including these ideas – not because I have not considered them, but because their importance demands more space than the topics encompassed here. A few examples are the financial aid adjustments that members of eating clubs receive from the university and how they both increase and decrease accessibility for students to join; the hired staff in the club, their demographics, their jobs, and primarily their relationship to and interactions with members (both on a daily level and in exclusive events that foster interaction); the themes of formal events and the way in which they reflect and offer concrete examples of officers making or not making attempts to be socially conscious and welcoming to diverse populations in different clubs across events and years; and the institutional relationship between each of the clubs, the system as a whole, and the university. Finally, a note about the language I use to describe gender: I apologize for not using more inclusive than the binaries of male and female, man and woman. These binaries are utilized by respondents, programming, and university records. It is incredibly important to recognize that many people worldwide do not identify within these binaries. However, given their prominent use in the field, I found myself constrained by the two opposing terms, and thus grudgingly use these terms myself.

This research focuses on gender, and as such leaves open questions concerning other cultural markers of difference and demographic categories. Princeton's reported 2014-15 demographics are 51% Men and 49% women. 41.3% classify as American minorities, and 11.3% are international students.¹ There is essentially no way to find the demographics of eating clubs in the scope and access of this thesis. My survey respondents are not entirely inclusive of my consultants in interview and observation data, but their demographics are largely indicative of

¹ Undergraduate admission and enrollment. The Trustees of Princeton University [database online]. 2014 [cited February 9 2015]. Available from <http://www.princeton.edu/pub/profile/admission/undergraduate/>.

those involved in this research. The respondents were 70% club members or alumni, 19% upperclassmen non-members, and 11% underclassmen who are not yet eligible for membership. Their demographics are 52% male-identifying and 48% female-identifying. 54% self-identify as white/Caucasian, 19% as Asian/Asian American, 11.5% as Indian, 11.5% as Black/African American, and 4% as Hispanic. I did not record sexual preference.

While socioeconomic class is certainly a topic of interest in the realm of student life and eating club membership, there are many barriers to accessing information about it. It is not possible for me to gather data on the actual distribution of class in each eating club or in the system as a whole; this marker is not something that is uniformly recorded and is certainly not published. Furthermore, class is a complex issue in terms of the affordability of membership in eating clubs. Both in my survey and in many other sources and conversations, finances are the primary reported reason that students do not join or drop membership in clubs. While dues can be very expensive for students in lower socioeconomic classes, university financial aid can cover much of these costs. However, they do so by giving each student extra money in their financial aid packages, so many students opt to use that money for other expenses. Eating club dues cost anywhere from around \$7,000 to over \$9,000 per member each year (junior and senior years), so it is not surprising that some upperclassmen choose not to join a club due to that expense, given that the few alternatives cost less. The issue of class trickles down from the clubs' long histories (which I will detail later in this project) and for those who cannot afford to join, it acts as symbol of the historic whiteness and elitism in which the clubs' existences are rooted. Yet class is extremely rarely discussed among undergraduates, as I never heard mention of it or the expenses eating clubs incur on their members. Because socioeconomic class does not visibly define

students, is difficult for me to uncover data about, and does not noticeably affect students' experiences or interactions within clubs, this thesis does not address this at length.

Race is a more visible and prominent identifier that deeply affects individuals' life experiences, but it is similarly complex and difficult to unpack in many of the same ways as socioeconomic class. Even more importantly for this study, race is an issue that did not come up over my four years of interactions at Princeton in the context of eating clubs (including in my research when I specifically looked for correlations and patterns of experience related to race). In my experience, issues of race at Princeton have a long history that is still being written alongside that of race in America. Conversations about race, particularly concerning African Americans, happen frequently and critically at Princeton, but focus on students' place and representation within the university as a whole institution. This broader focal point leaves me with little data relevant to a specific study of eating clubs. Generally, I have felt the sentiment that the overall racial and ethnic diversity of students is celebrated as being progressively high relative both to Princeton's history as well as to other universities. While the overall American stereotype of Ivy Leagues includes a heavy element of whiteness and social privilege, students frequently see the variety of representation within their population as somewhat precluding them from making race an everyday conversation about eating club membership or experiences. As an outside researcher, I am critical of this stance and believe scrutiny is necessary in moving forward toward a Prospect Ave full of clubs that reflect the diversity of the student population. Though these conversations need to be happening more critically, as of this research racial differences were not mentioned as defining students' experiences in eating clubs.

Finally, a demographic marker that becomes prominently visible in the social activities of eating clubs but that is not explored in depth in this thesis is sexual orientation. Once again,

sexual orientation is not something that I ever heard discussed, and it did not come up in any of my interviews or responses. From partial observation, I believe students with LGBTQ identities are much more likely to seek out alternative social experiences from eating clubs due to the heteronormative nature of the party/drinking activities that take place in the latter. However, my only concrete evidence to support this claim is that 100% of non-member survey respondents “Strongly Agree” that they desire Princeton to have a different prominent social life than the clubs, and all also “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that the social space in eating clubs reinforces a gender binary. Members’ responses to these questions had a much larger spread. LGBTQ identifying students are certainly members in eating clubs, but it is infrequently visible, and even less frequently brought up as a topic either positively or negatively. An extension of this project would include outreach to the Princeton LGBTQ community and a survey of eating club members’ sexual orientations. I would urge leadership to consider this population as in need of focus and of critical thinking as to why they are largely invisible on Prospect Ave.

Given that all of these social identities and differences are inaccessible and apparently of less importance to my consultants as the topic of gender, I continue on to focus this thesis on the latter. I have seen, experienced, and been informed about the myriad ways an undergraduate student’s gender identity deeply and frequently affects their experiences in eating clubs. I am also in a unique place to access rich information about the actual felt experience of gender in this population, as I am an undergraduate woman. While gender cannot be completely removed from other social identities, my lack of definitive information on different identity markers and the infrequency of their discussion in reported experiences prevents this thesis from addressing other characteristics as their own topics.

Literature Review

History/Institutions/Student Life

Beginning to look into the topic of eating clubs at Princeton, I found sources that trace larger patterns across the history of elite institutions such as Ivy League universities. For example, Karabel's *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (2005) probes into the annals of institutional histories to uncover practices of exclusion in every form, bringing to light the spotted history of the bicker process and its alterations in the 1950s and 1960s. Even less well-known books, such as Padilla's *Portraits in Leadership: Six Extraordinary University Presidents* (Padilla 2005), raise Princeton University as an example that reflects larger social hierarchies through its institutional structures. In this book, various Princeton presidents (most notoriously, Woodrow Wilson) are mentioned as seeing eating clubs as an unjust system harmful to social and academic life on campus. The alumni stopped any changes from being made to the system, however, and outsiders' attitude towards the clubs seems to be quite different from those of insiders (that is, students and alumni). The tradition of eating clubs is one of the most longstanding social traditions in the country's university system, second only to the original secret societies, such as Yale's Skull and Bones.

As Friendly and Glucksberg's 1970 study points out, Princeton was a 'boy's world' until the 1970s, with a rich and distinct enough culture for them to conduct research on subcultural lexicons – many of which asserted specific characteristics to the legacies of particular eating clubs (1970). As becomes clear in the Lord, Lepper, and Mackie study (1984), the cultural expectations unique to each club had not changed much and are extremely difficult to alter across time (Lord 1984). Indeed, the identifiers used in their study hardly differ from the description given in Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* published in 1920, based on Fitzgerald's

own experiences attending the school around 1915. Studies like those conducted by Nelson and Norton (2005) illustrate further examples of how social priming affects people's expectations of themselves, as well as give insight into the population of Princeton undergraduate students. The researchers here primed Princeton students with particular superhero ideals, then discovered in what ways this priming affected their likelihood to help out and volunteer. These sort of psychological studies are useful for my project both by setting up a legacy of Princeton students' self-conceptions and aiding me to ensure I am not unintentionally priming my participants in any way that might bias my results.

Similarly, the Prentice, Miller, and Lightdale (2004) study aims to distinguish between common-bond and common-identity groups and gives a strong history of how students identify in eating clubs. It is revealing for my purposes that in order to conduct a study on these group types, the researchers sought groups with extremely strong attachments to their group identity – so they turned to eating clubs. The way that this study was conducted reveals both how students are attached to the idea of membership, as well as how extremely influential club membership can be on students' personal lives and university experiences.

Unfortunately, there has been little to no academic writing or research that mentions eating clubs or anything similar since around 2000. While the feminist academic literature continues to grow, most of it focuses on topics like sexuality in terms of stereotypical college experiences such as “hookup culture.” While this is important, and useful to me to some degree, I've found there to be a large gap in analysis of experiences outside that very specific social realm. To fill that gap, some of the writings I have probed are articles from the Princeton website, the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, and *The Daily Beast*. The school seems interested in maintaining somewhat regular publications about their female population and the history of

women students. In the past decade journalists are finding and writing about data that reveals women at Princeton are still not excelling in leadership positions across the campus. These articles, though not academic, are well-known throughout the student body. For my purposes, articles about women in leadership at Princeton are of course useful as part of the context I am exploring. But perhaps even more importantly, some of the journalists are seeking particular causes for these disparities, which has led to significant backlash toward anyone asking students about sexism, or any topics implying that students or university leaders might be involved in sexist practices. As this is something my project will be probing, it is key to know what my target population feels that outsiders are saying about them, and emphasizing in what ways my goals are different. I feel that this project will help fill the gap in the literature about the actual existence, function, and current transformations of eating clubs.

Researching and Writing Gender

In looking into anthropological research on gender and feminism, Lewin's compilation simply titled *Feminist Anthropology* directed me to the history of women in anthropology, which as made clear in Edwin Ardener's 1968 and 1975 essays was originally marginal, and was brought to the forefront as more women entered academia and became anthropologists themselves (Lewin 2006). His original work was titled "The Problem of Women," the problem being how to study them well. Since then, the discipline has had pioneer ethnographers, from Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead to Gayle Rubin, developing theories and methodologies to do exactly that. Indeed, by 1980, Michelle Rosaldo, among others, was grappling with the ways that anthropologists explore the worlds of women and preserve their unique creations (Lewin 2006). The issues Rosaldo encountered included universalizing, dichotomizing, and not fully addressing

the structural consequences and social constructions of patriarchal societies. Esther Newton's 1993 essay on the erotic equation in fieldwork points out an important methodological consideration of what is lacking when "the postmodern scrutiny of the relation between informant, researcher, and text is limited to who is talking or even what is said," (Lewin 2006:170). In my work, I learn from her explicitly reflexive discussion and make a point to focus much attention on my own social relationships with my subjects, especially as these relationships play a large part in both their willingness to respond and the sort of regard they have of my project.

Margery Wolf's *A Thrice Told Tale* (1992) explores multiple ways ethnographic material can be expressed and published. It also discusses the ethics of depicting particular cultures in particular ways. As Wolf grapples with these conflicts, she offers particularly useful insights and considerations for anyone doing similar studies. "We have begun to search for a way to do ethnographic research that not only will not exploit other women," she writes, "but will have positive effects on their lives." This is what I hope to do by offering women an opportunity to speak out about subjects they may be silenced on (Wolf 1992:52). Wolf writes on feminist defamiliarization and power relations between researcher and subject, which are considerations I plan to make explicit in this thesis in order to give a clear understanding of my role and relationship to the subjects. As Wolf writes:

Experience is messy. Searching for patterns in behavior, a consistency in attitudes, the meaning of a casual conversation is what anthropologists do, and they are nearly always dependent on a ragtag collection of facts and fantasies of an often small sample of a population from a fragment of a historical time. When human behavior is the data, a tolerance for ambiguity, multiplicity, contradiction, and instability is essential (Wolf 1992:129).

Keeping these truths about ethnography in mind will allow me to keep my project open and include details about the limitations of my research scope.

I must also mention folklorist Patricia Sawin's work with Bessie Eldreth, which is an incredible work of dialogic ethnography that completely blows open traditional folklore collection techniques (2002). Sawin gives readers a detailed outline and reasoning behind her practices, which offers methods of ethnographic research that are specifically tailored to women, allows subjects to define themselves, and uniquely leaves space for researchers to discover details of performance within people's everyday lives. Useful to my project is Sawin's particularly open-ended ethnographic technique, where she allows the subject to tell whichever stories they find important and in whatever manner they are inclined to. By not directing the content of the interviews or conversations, Sawin uncovers another layer of ethnographic material by organically discovering the values and experiences most important to her subjects. My interview questions were designed along these lines.

More recently, Cordelia Fine has published an enlightening book in which she consolidates the results of countless psychological studies concerning gender (2010). While she spends a lot of space debunking myths of gender or sex-based difference, she also goes into great detail about the methods of the studies she includes. There is one standout, repeated piece of information that I found most useful in her book. In myriad studies, researchers found that in controlled settings there are no divisions in the successes of participants. But as soon as researchers mention gender, or even pervasive stereotypes of gender, the results begin to increase and decline according to the participants' resulting alterations in self-perception. Fine's book, *Delusions of Gender*, contains irrefutable evidence that, given absolutely equal ability, people will achieve more or less depending on what expectations and cultural knowledge they carry

with them. As the book points out, these expectations are developed over a lifetime, so it is important that my methodology attempts to avoid reference to any stereotypes that may affect participants' self-conception during my research.

I discovered useful direction from Alcoff's essay on the development of feminist academia. In an edited volume by Duncan, Alcoff writes, "role-based male and female activities were taken to be gendered by nature and therefore in no need of explanation... Women's activities were assumed to be guided by natural instinct," (p 19). While she is discussing the problems with early social science research caused by the lack of women's voices, Alcoff goes on to say that what arose when women entered the field was a brand-new feminist perspective that problematized every role and relation that has anything to do with gender or sex. It is in this de-naturalization, to borrow one of her terms, of conventional tradition and social expectations that I would like to locate this work. In a place/experience such as Princeton, which is so steeped in tradition, oftentimes roles in social interactions are assumed. The method of problematizing every relationship and interaction, then, is fruitful and revealing in terms of both implicit and explicit constructions.

Geographer Joanne Sharp's article about feminist methodologies in fieldwork and research details how both qualitative and quantitative methods can be utilized and interpreted in ways useful for a feminist subversion of the accepted ideas about a group, place, society, etc. (Sharp 2005). She discusses how ethnography is widely accepted to be a feminist methodology because of its individual nature, and indeed finding it so makes it the principal method of my study. She goes on, however, to discuss quantitative methods and the importance of combining data with qualitative narrative to create an open-ended, multi-layered picture of what is happening in a given place, which is also something I hope to do. My description of my

experience and my interviews with students, guided by these theories of gender and anthropological writing, strive to elucidate the ways in which women are thinking about and experiencing their realities in these clubs. These experiences have been discussed almost entirely within the system, and often only quietly amongst women students.

Social Geography of Boundaries and Space

As I continued thinking about my project, I began to realize that the studies of groups, boundaries, and forms of exclusion are integral to any scholarly treatment of the world of eating clubs. The clubs have a long history of membership and exclusive policies for access and participation. This, in combination with the university's long history of excluding women, a history that stretches into fairly recent times within the club system, makes this literature an important part of this research. Daphne Spain's *Gendered Spaces* (1992) offers a great introduction to geographic, sociological, and anthropological assessments of the different ways spaces are created, bounded, and assigned roles according to binary expectations of male or female use. It is here that I found the concept of 'spatial institutions,' which she defines as matching social institutions with their spatial locations (i.e., family with the home, education with the school premises, etc.). Spain expands upon this notion by explaining that "spatial segregation does more than create a physical distance; it also affects the distribution of knowledge women could use to change their position in society" (Spain 1992: xiv). These particular analytical tools and concepts provide a methodological framework for how I conceptualize, explain, and deconstruct the physical space of the houses and their boundaries both within and without. The theoretical framework Spain utilizes in a combination of feminist geography and sociology has become central to my approach in this project. Spain enhances the

discussion of how “the spatial structure of buildings embodies knowledge of social relations, or the taken-for-granted rules that govern relations of individuals to each other and society” (Spain 1992:7). It is these ‘taken-for-granted rules’ into which I’ve found myself delving, and in the case of the clubs, these social norms are inextricable from the physical spaces in which they occur. In many ways, I have found the physical spaces of these clubs to embody social relations, traditions, and bureaucracy in ways that require Spain’s concepts and related ones to fully describe.

Furthermore, I would be remiss to leave out how Spain’s work pointed me in the direction of Doreen Massey, a feminist geographer with a long legacy, whose book *Space, Place, and Gender* gives the term ‘spatial’ a definition and academic concept: “It is a way of thinking in terms of the ever-shifting geometry of social/power relations, and it forces into view the real multiplicities of space-time” (Massey 1994:4). As she explains, “The spatial organization of society... is integral to the production of the social...it is fully implicated in both history and politics” (ibid). Ultimately, the takeaway for my study is a qualitative way of assessing the physical spaces in which the events and lives of my consultants occur. “Spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood,” she writes (Massey 1994: 179). This cardinally informs the understandings I will use to assess my data and experiences. While the physicality of the clubs and the layers of access created by space demand to be noticed and experienced, I believe mine will be the first project to examine this from the perspective of social geography and consider the implications it has on the students’ social experiences.

Sexuality

My desire to address the ways that gender is inextricably tied to sexuality led me to many sources detailing histories of our society's concepts of sexuality, both the terms we use and the concepts of normality that have developed. Katz's far reaching *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, originally published in 1995, catalogues the main thinkers throughout the 20th century and their development of categories and labels concerning people's sexual desires. Katz gives a detailed history of the changes in thinking concerning sexuality, and in turn of prescribed gender roles, that is a useful framework to assess how our current stereotypes, expectations, and institutionalized requirements have developed. Katz reminds us that labels on sexuality are a relatively new cultural category. When these labels were created, ideas of sexuality were concerned primarily with procreation and the general erasure of sexual desire.

Gayle Rubin's "Thinking Sex" (1984) gives a long and thorough cultural and political history of the different forms of sexual deviance in American history. In this article, Rubin articulates the importance of social conceptions of and attitudes toward sex: "Disputes over sexual behavior often become the vehicles for displacing social anxieties...the struggles that were fought leave a residue in the form of laws, social practices, and ideologies which then affect the way in which sexuality is experienced" (p 196). Because universities (especially in situations laden with alcohol and other drugs) are hotbeds of sexual activity, deviation, experimentation, etc., Rubin's clear statements about the significance of sexuality are integral to this project. As she describes, "sexuality in Western societies has been structured within an extremely punitive social framework, and has been subjected to very real formal and informal controls... Western cultures generally consider sex to be a dangerous, destructive, negative force" (p 198). In light of

the social power of sex described here, the deconstruction of sexual expectations and their social manifestations are crucial to a full explanation of the social experiences of my subjects.

The 2007 documentary “Heavy Petting” illustrates the extreme lengths many Americans went to in the mid-20th century to discourage sexual deviation and sexual activity among young people. It is clear from the media and interviews in the film that the legacy of sexuality in the U.S. is founded on purposeful misinformation and fear tactics in order to control the younger generations’ sexual interactions and to reinforce sex negativity as a cultural standard – particularly for women. Though many attitudes toward sex and sexuality have changed since the 1950s, this particular cultural history remains a significant part of embedded social expectations in mainstream American culture. As such, this history affects me as an American researcher and the self-conceptions of my subjects.

One of the more recent works in feminist literature that includes social sexualization can be found in Ritzenhoff and Hermes’ collection *Sex and Sexuality in a Feminist World* (2009). This book contains Henke and Boyle’s study that found, as have most of this kind, that college men and women perceive their hookup experiences quite differently, with women feeling more nervousness, guilt, and shame than men. Not surprisingly, they also found that women are much more likely to be considered to have a negative (undesirable) reputation correlating with an increasing number of sexual encounters. Research such as this becomes relevant to my work in that many of the events hosted by eating clubs include binge drinking and other risky consumption behavior that often leads to casual hookups of the sort that recent researchers find so fascinating. Along these lines, Katherine Hermes’s introduction to the section of the book titled “Modern Love and Student Bodies” offers a concise explanation of the social emotion behind this study. She writes, “Having sex like men, that is, without worrying about

consequences, had become so pervasive that some women could not understand why they felt bad about it” (Ritzenhoff 2009:284). These social concerns apply to the stories and reported emotions of my interviewees and other consultants. In some cases, negative sexual reputations can affect the chances of an underclassman (typically a woman) from being successful in bickering a club. On the flip side of this issue, in cruder scenarios, such a reputation might increase a woman’s chances, as the male members of the club might be interested in pursuing her for casual sexual relationships during future events. The topic of casual hookups is also one that is easier to find in student or campus newspapers (indeed, I read a few opinion articles in the *Daily Princetonian* concerning this topic) than in academic literature, as it is in the contested crux of sexuality and sexism that is so personal in experience and opinion. Whether or not students actually feel this way at Princeton, and whether or not they feel compelled by any of these thoughts or assessments to alter their actions, are questions that are addressed, yet only partially answered in this thesis.

Part 1: What are Eating Clubs? (First Impressions)

I. Notes on Princeton University

Let me begin with several details of how general policies at Princeton University (hereinafter referred to as “Princeton” or “PU”) work that make eating clubs so ubiquitous in comparison with the variety of outlets and social clubs at other universities. First and foremost, according to the university’s numbers,² 98% of students live on campus, with freshman and sophomores required to live in their randomly assigned residential college. This unusually high level of on-campus residency creates a social world almost completely dependent on the campus and campus life. In contrast, I have spent an average of 10-20 hours per week on the UNC campus this semester, as I have a course underload and live in an apartment complex one mile off campus. The social lives of UNC upperclassmen revolve around friends’ apartments and rental houses as well as the bars and restaurants on Franklin Street. At Princeton, however, “going out” in terms of drinking events refers not to bars or house parties but to eating clubs and in some cases to pregames in dorm rooms. I will explain this at length later.

This on-campus “bubble” together with Princeton’s high level of grant-style financial aid means that students’ meals are provided almost exclusively by university organizations, that is, by dining halls and eating clubs. In contrast, I do not know any UNC seniors and only a few juniors with a dining hall meal plan or even university flex dollars to spend at on-campus locations. These differences are worth noting to explain why the eating club life is nearly universal for Princeton students throughout all four years of their undergraduate education. On average, three-quarters of all juniors and seniors are members in a club. The unique phenomena

² A Princeton Profile: Campus Life. September 9, 2014 [cited January 26 2015]. Available from <http://www.princeton.edu/pub/profile/campus-life/>.

found in these spaces is entirely contingent on so much of the student body participating regularly, as well as on the singularity of the eating clubs as a social outlet for undergraduate students.

Princeton does active fraternities and sororities, but they play a very minimal role on campus relative to their counterparts at other universities due to participation being officially banned on campus (meaning they are not allowed to reserve and use campus spaces to convene). This does not prevent them from existing, with an estimated 15% of the student population in years 2010-2011 participating.³ Largely, they function as organizations that provide underclassmen (who are not members of clubs or the legal drinking age) alcohol. However, in 2012 the university instituted a rule preventing students from rushing (the joining process) as freshmen, a measure which somewhat diminished this role of Princeton's greek life. This in turn emphasized the organizations' roles as pipelines into particular eating club memberships. If a particular fraternity or sorority has a large portion of its membership in a specific club, students will join those organizations to gain an affiliation and meet those members who can vote them into the club they wish to join. Princeton's fraternities and sororities have very little effect on campus life outside of what has been briefly mentioned, especially considering the small portion of the undergraduate population that is members. This leads most students to use the term "greek life" not to refer to Princeton's fraternities and sororities, but to the social life on other college campuses that centers on these organizations. So while fraternities and sororities do exist, their typical roles on college campuses are encompassed and surpassed by that of the eating clubs.

³ Report of the working group on campus social & residential life: Fraternities and sororities. In The Trustees of Princeton University [database online]. Princeton University Reports, May 6, 2011 [cited March 21 2015]. Available from <http://www.princeton.edu/reports/2011/campuslife/obs-rec/fraternities-sororities/>.

Princeton students typically compare greek life at other schools to their eating club system when discussing the pros and cons of the latter.

Finally, something that I believe is important but will not become clear until a later section of this thesis is the way campus healthcare works. PU has a campus health center called McCosh which acts as a full service medical center. There is also a hospital, Princeton Medical Center (or PMC). At McCosh, on campus, the policy for students is: “medical office visits, individual or group psychological counseling, travel planning, athletic medicine services, inpatient stays, Sexual Harassment/Assault Advising, Resources, and Education (SHARE) services, X-rays and some laboratory tests are available at no direct cost to the student.”⁴ The words “no direct cost to student,” mean that PU does not charge the student’s insurance at all. There is no need, or indeed no way, that the student’s medical records would be shared with anyone else, including their insurance holder if different from themselves. Going to PMC, on the other hand, is treated like a regular hospital visit. This privacy is extremely important to students in this college campus setting, where things can and frequently do go wrong, landing students in overnight medical care situations.

II. What are Eating Clubs?

Princeton University is currently home to eleven eating clubs, six of which are joined through the bicker process (a sort of application, interview, discussion process which I will detail in a later section) and five of which are joined by signing-in. Essentially one simply signs up; some clubs have lotteries in place if the first round of interested students outnumber available

⁴ Costs and billing for services provided at UHS. The Trustees of Princeton University [database online]. 2012 [cited February 4 2015]. Available from <http://www.princeton.edu/uhs/student-services/costs-billing/>.

membership. Ivy⁵ was the first to open in 1879, and since then there have been twenty various clubs that have opened and closed over the course of the university's history (with the most at one time being eighteen, the least being ten). Eating clubs physically exist as individual mansions that line each side of Prospect Avenue, dead-ending at campus across from the student union. They are not off-campus in terms of their location, but are technically not university buildings, and are therefore off-campus in official designation. The physicality of their existence is one feature that interests me in being unique from other exclusive clubs or semi-secret societies in the American university system. This raises discussion of theories rooted in social geography that I will address later. Prospect Avenue is referred to as "The Street" by students, and frequently so as it is the primary form of social life and essentially the only outlet to the classic college party culture on a regular basis (I will come back to this as well). Throughout this project I and my consultants use the phrase 'the street' to describe Prospect Avenue. All eating clubs are individual non-profit institutions, with budgets provided largely by alumni endowment funds and the Princeton Prospect Foundation, but which students have to pay a significant amount of money in dues each semester (covering the costs of not only their meal plans, but special events, alcohol, and the maintenance of the space and employees). The clubs have a house manager/steward who coordinates between the officers, the staff, and the grad board (the graduate board is made up of alumni that makes decisions for the club and is essentially a foundation board); the steward is also 'in charge' and runs the happenings in the house. Behind the scenes, each house would not function without a fair amount of staff members; the majority of the day to day hired staff are cooking, cleaning, or at night are bouncers.

⁵ "Ivy Club." The clubs all have technically longer names ending in 'Club' or 'Inn' that I refrain from using throughout this project because it is almost never actually said or used except on official printed materials made by the clubs themselves.

The primary function of eating clubs is to serve breakfast, lunch, dinner, or brunch to its members as well as provide them with space to study and socialize (again, 98% of students live on campus in dormitories – only officers actually live in the houses). Full membership in all clubs is restricted to junior and senior undergraduates. Students' first chance to join a club is February of the spring semester of their sophomore year. If successful, they become partial members. At this stage, they have an allotment of meals per week or per semester that they are allowed to take at the club (these allotments are determined primarily by each club's rules and are coordinated with the school meal plans). Sophomore partial members do not have the privilege of bringing guests to special events (and are sometimes not invited to these events at all). The treatment of sophomore members varies greatly by club and in many ways is reflective of greater social structures and patterns individual to each. The process of joining or being rejected is something I will discuss at length.

The secondary function of eating clubs is providing events and alcohol. Each club is 'allowed' to be 'open' two nights a week, and one extra night for members, meaning their bar is on tap. Students can get in and drink for free, as much as they want, based on any of several entrance policies depending on the club, the expected crowd, or the purpose of the night (see "events" section for more details). The drinks on open nights are limited to beer and are closely monitored by officers and hired bouncers. In addition, members' events are common in clubs, from formals and semi-formals to weekly 'club nights' when members get beer with dinner. Closed events are rarer, occurring at most a few times a semester. They include formals and semi-formals, open to members and limited guests. These events frequently start with cocktail hours including various liquor or champagne-based drinks, as well as food, photos, dancing, or other special activities depending on the occasion.

It is in this second function that I am primarily interested, though I will describe the everyday functions of the clubs for a deeper understanding, as well as for purposes of comparison. The implicit and explicit boundaries of these events, as well as the unique manifestation of a somewhat universal American college alcohol culture in the 21st century, prompted me to focus on these aspects of the eating club world, as will hopefully unfold clearly throughout the thesis. I also discuss gender at some length. Gender involves and is affected by both the primary and secondary functions of the clubs.

III. First Impressions

The first time I visited Princeton was in May 2012, the end of my first year in college. Princeton loomed in my imagination as Ivy Leagues do to all those who have never been: an unattainable location of legacy, power, and a complete world of their own. Indeed, friends I interviewed briefly about their impressions responded either that they only knew Princeton through my boyfriend and me, or that their only impression was along the lines of my friend who said, “I assume everyone is much smarter than I am.”⁶

When I got to campus, the first order of business was of course to be taken on a tour. “These are the gates we can’t walk through until graduation,” “these are each class’s ivy sprigs,” “this is the student union (featured in *House, MD*) with the classroom Einstein taught in.” “These are the residential colleges, the hockey rink, Nassau Street.”

Then, “this is Prospect Avenue.” “These are the eating clubs.” The classic framework for this walkthrough has existed since the clubs moved into their current large buildings at the end of the 19th century and has been detailed by observers ever since, most famously by Fitzgerald, and of

⁶ Interview with UNC senior W9, January 10, 2015.

course over the years by visitors such as myself. In *This Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald describes his experiences as a Princeton student, including a well-known paragraph where he gives one-line descriptions of each club. The ritual of walking down Prospect Ave, pointing at each building, naming it, and giving its stereotypes, continues so strongly that I myself have done it when friends visit for the first time. “That’s Terrace, they’re alternative. Lots of weed.” “That’s Colonial. Most members are of Asian descents, or are engineers.” “That’s Ivy. It’s for the rich people.” Pointing out how objectively devoid of significance the names are: Cannon has a cannon in the front yard; Cloister and Tower are named after the actual structure of their mansions, Ivy, Cap and Gown, no one really knows, etc. The whole scene feels bizarre the first time, like you’ve entered an alternate reality where fancy things and alcohol are free with no strings attached. This sense was of course heightened by the fact that we were first-years. The member demographic, juniors and seniors, were like adults to us: smart, secure, accomplished, etc. Membership felt mystical, as does membership in anything that one is denied access to. But to anyone who sees the street for the first time, the biggest surprise is truly the size of the houses. The mansions are massive, and many of them with minimal additions since they were first built in the 1890s. The mysticism and massiveness of the first impression is precisely what I aim to deconstruct. The clubs are not, in every way, the monolithic system that first appears but rather are home to a multiplicity of experiences, opinions, social interactions, debates, policies, and events.

Part 2: History

Eating clubs began in 1879 with the founding of Ivy by Princeton undergraduates who “didn’t like the eating options that were on campus, so the wealthy ones started contracting out with what were boarding houses in the town at the time... they started paying them to cook their meals there.”⁷ Eventually, Ivy grew big enough that the organization began to focus full-time on feeding students. So early on, as a student who worked on his eating club’s recent history project relayed to me, they started as “eating options for students who could afford to pay someone to cook better food for them than the university provided.”⁸ Some sources, including official university sources, argue that the primary motivation for taking meals in boarding houses was that the university simply was not able to provide enough meals for everyone. Regardless, it was the wealthiest students who were able to afford this option, and the richest from among a Princeton population that was then composed almost entirely of the wealthiest young white men in the country. As can be seen in the timeline in Appendix 2, the two major waves of clubs opening occurred in the early 1890s and the early 1900s. It took the first surge of clubs only a few years to centralize from boarding houses across town to their current buildings on Prospect Ave. Even more remarkable is that although the houses have generally undergone additions to expand dining space, the current mansions are the original buildings, or buildings only a few years older than the first editions. The grandeur would have been exceedingly more lavish and unnecessary in the early years, considering the first few decades of these clubs saw memberships hovering around twenty to thirty students. Now the buildings serve memberships that average 150-160.

⁷ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

⁸ Ibid.

Between then and now, the eating club system as a single entity, though challenged both from within and without many times over the years, has largely stood fixed. World events have affected their practices, and less frequently university policies have done the same, but a particularly noticeable facet of the clubs is their power as a conglomerate across the years. One of the first oppositions to the club system was then university president Woodrow Wilson, who is well-documented to have hated the institutions and who attempted to pass regulations to close them during his time in the role from 1902-1910. Unfortunately for Wilson, and for opponents throughout the years, the club alumni are of course also the university alumni. Threatening the clubs then means threatening the expansive donor base and endowment of Princeton University itself. As a Princeton Senior who has studied the history of the institutions explains it:

If they really want to put their foot down and say no to the university, they're pretty much the only institution that has that power... None of the land developers in Princeton have enough power to say no to the university... no student groups have the power, fraternities and sororities didn't have the power to say no, but the eating clubs have enough money.⁹

The next major event in the history of eating clubs is the federal institution of Prohibition from 1919-1933, which ostensibly should have limited the role of the clubs – but on the contrary, many of the clubs reacted by creating their own speakeasies to continue to provide members with the alcohol and events to which they were accustomed.¹⁰ As one source explains, “the administration and the clubs reached a ‘Gentlemen’s Agreement’ under which the clubs were permitted to police themselves as long as their behavior remained within reasonable bounds.”¹¹ In some sense, this era is the precedent that has defined the relationship between the clubs and

⁹ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The Princeton University Task Force. 2010. *A brief history of the development and evolution of the eating club system and Princeton University*. Interclub Council.

the university in all times that alcohol has been illegal, including the past forty or so years that the drinking age has been raised to twenty-one.

World War II had a firsthand effect on the clubs, as Princeton itself was essentially suspended in order to provide space and support for soldiers stationed in the area, as well as in order for students themselves to enlist. The post-war surge of the student population increased club membership by twofold, which combined with changing demographics (due to things such as the GI bill, increasing democratization of society, etc.) to bring a decade of intense debate over the bicker system.¹² Eventually, at the end of the 1960s, several of the clubs became open/non-selective, or sign-in clubs.

Throughout the 1960s, a handful of women attended Princeton's Critical Languages program. They were the first women full-time students at the university, but the program was only one year, defining them as not full Princeton undergraduates.¹³ In 1969, Princeton admitted women as full undergraduate students, with eight transfer students graduating in 1970 and the first full class graduating in 1973.¹⁴ The majority of the clubs welcomed women in the first year, 1969 (Colonial, Campus-Elm, Charter, Cloister, Dial, Tower, Cap, and Quad). The remaining four refused going co-ed (Cannon [which closed shortly after, in 1975], Cottage, Ivy, TI). Cottage, Ivy, and TI would hold out until Sally Frank filed a lawsuit against them for gender discrimination, which began in 1979. This case eventually made it to the Supreme Court. During this process, in 1986, Cottage conceded to their likely defeat and began to allow women, but it took the Supreme Court's ruling in 1990 to force Ivy to comply. TI waited until being denied an

¹² The Princeton University Task Force. 2010. *A brief history of the development and evolution of the eating club system and Princeton University*. Interclub Council.

¹³ Haggin, Patience. 2014. Pioneering women: The 50th anniversary of Princeton's first female undergraduates. *The Daily Princetonian*, May 30, 2014, sec Street.

¹⁴ Snowden, Vanessa. The history of women at Princeton University. Princeton University Library. Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, 2012.

appeal to allow women in 1991-2.¹⁵ While women are members in these clubs today, their legacies of being unwelcoming towards women through fighting their inclusion for multiple decades is still salient in students' perceptions of and attitudes toward these clubs, particularly TI. TI has had many nasty scandals concerning sexual harassment¹⁶, hazing, security issues¹⁷, and more¹⁸ in recent years. These were spoken about frequently both in my interviews and in the everyday conversations among students. As a Cap alumna from the second class of women in Princeton said, "I don't think I ever went in to Cannon, I don't think I ever went into TI... you know, this whole idea of talking about environments being safe, Cap was... a club that was safe."¹⁹ She posited a theory about why not much has changed since the early 1970s in terms of some people's views on these clubs: back then, freshmen and sophomores did not go to parties in the clubs, she explained. The sexual dynamic of a senior male approaching a freshman female is something that potentially creates uneven power levels between the two students and by extension their peers. This use of dominance to control social interactions perpetuates a feeling of uneasiness some women may still have towards these historically female-unfriendly clubs. The details of these interactions, habits, and opinions are of great importance in my descriptions and analysis.

As it stands today, the clubs all have women in leadership, alumni, and membership. The clubs have developed a close relationship with the university, with resources and trainings in place to ensure officers are prepared to properly handle situations with sexual health as well as

¹⁵ Stanley, Alessandra. 1990. Court tells Princeton clubs they must admit women. *The New York Times*, July 4, 1990, sec N.Y./Region.

¹⁶ Kaminer, Ariel. 2014. Princeton eating club ousts 2 officers over emails ridiculing women. *The New York Times*, December 1, 2014, sec N.Y./Region.

¹⁷ Quiogue, Lorenzo. 2014. Tiger inn members elect four new officers following 21 club scandal. *The Daily Princetonian*, April 1, 2014, sec News.

¹⁸ Golub, Grant. 2015. Princeton police investigated allegations against tiger inn bouncers, records show. *The Daily Princetonian*, January 4, 2015.

¹⁹ Interview with Princeton alumna W7, March 6, 2014.

with potential ingestion of too much alcohol. In recent history, a new town police chief tried to shut the system down by annually arresting the club presidents,²⁰ which ended in essentially nothing changing (this is discussed at length later). A new wave of criticizing the bicker process has emerged with little indication of success, and the clubs are largely focusing on becoming more broadly inclusive, developing a service council, and generally improving members' experiences. The historical legacies are omnipresent, but each year's memberships in each individual club has their own priorities and issues to deal with. I will be exploring some of the most important recent events and pervasive critical conversations.

²⁰ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

Part 3: Events

Section 1: Everyday Meals and Socialization

In setting out to write about eating clubs, others have largely assumed that the project would deal with the social ways members organize themselves to eat. In fact, I have found this to be the least interesting aspect of the clubs. Instead I found more interesting how my respondents set their day-to-day eating and socializing experiences up in opposition to those when they ‘go out’ at night (see next event).

Members eat 2-3 meals a day and spend varying numbers of hours participating in social or scholarly activities at their club. Most houses have large open living and dining rooms, a library, a computer room, a TV room, and some sort of game room (commonly, a billiards room). Favorite pastimes differ by club and year. Terrace plays a particular pool game called “balls,” a lot of current Cap members play FIFA on a TV game system, many clubs have scheduled viewing parties for popular television shows, etc. As is reflected in the data I collected, this social time with other members and the opportunity to have a space where one will always find friends and acquaintances is the main value of joining a club for the majority of students. Almost all of my interviewees mentioned how different eating clubs seem once you join them, primarily because of the sense of belonging at all hours, and the transformation from seeing them as playing the roles of hosting events (that I will describe throughout this portion of the project) to thinking of them as a close-knit community to spend time with. One of the things that I specifically looked for in my visits for this project was patterns in eating groups at Cap, and I completely failed to find any particular people groups, student groups, or demographics that organized solely amongst themselves. Cap is somewhat well known for being one of the more diverse clubs, especially in terms of race. Clubs with more distinct social lines may show a

different experience in which particular social groups sit in specified areas, but it is not something I have observed. Students there are conscious of, and often remark upon, how club membership provides access to many people they otherwise would not get to build close relationships with. For example, a member remarked to me, “no one ever... sits at the same table all the time,”²¹ going on to say that part of what she values in her membership is the variety of people and interests she interacts with on a daily basis in these everyday activities. The several meals that I observed at Cap proved this comment true. Where people sat was almost completely a function of where there was room at tables that other people were already sitting at, and was therefore a coincidence of who was eating a particular meal at the same time. The exception to this is that the officers sit at the table in the entranceway to the serving area, because part of their job is to monitor who is eating, so making sure that guests are documented and paid for through meal plans or members. This generally means that people who are already friends with the officers sitting there will sit in the same area. This, though, has little pattern, and is not a rule. One day, in fact, I was the only one sitting there watching the meal tickets and the table was still full of members and conversation. This experience gave me an insider sense of the social value and deep connections that membership can forge.

The importance of these connections seems especially in the forefront of the minds of my women respondents, as one of the main, recurring things they remark upon about their own club is that they feel like it is a ‘safe space’ and somewhere they can go to feel comfortable and without judgment. This is supported by the data collected by my survey, which shows a marked shift of respondents saying their gender affects their experience in other clubs more than it does in their own.²² When asked if she felt her gender made any difference within her club, a current

²¹ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

²² Questions 13 and 14 in survey results, Appendix 1.

student said, “on a regular, day-to-day basis in Cap, no,”²³ remarking that she thinks this is the case for most women in most clubs. This idea of general comfort once in a club is a recurring theme. One alumna explains why the fall of her senior was one of her favorite times in her club: “it tended to be juniors and seniors who were friends of juniors and seniors I was friends with... I’ve always really enjoyed members’ nights, because I do really like the people who are in the club.”²⁴ She continued on to talk about membership, saying that when she got in to her club, “it became sort of what I think a lot of people who don’t like going out are looking for, which is a place where you can kind of relax and unwind, and be with the people that you actually care about... you don’t have to deal with a lot of social pressure or social judgment.”²⁵

A similar sort of rhetoric came up in a Cap alumna’s description of what her experience was like joining the club in the early 1970s:

I joined Cap and Gown and all the guys really wanted women to be there, so it was a very welcoming environment. I was really shy and embarrassed to go, and the guys were so incredibly nice; they would come by my dorm room every day and say, ‘you have to come to the club,’ and I’m like ‘I’m afraid to go.’ ‘We’ll meet you there, don’t worry.’ I mean, they were absolutely as nice as they could possibly be to try to make you feel welcome and comfortable there. ...To me, Cap and Gown is my ‘safe place.’ It was when I was there, it’s been ever since.²⁶

What emerged as remarkable to me was the ways in which this language of membership as creating safe spaces and safe communities for women parallels what is said by current students.

When discussing the difference between going out to ‘the street’ as an underclassman and becoming a full member, a current junior commented to me:

²³ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

²⁴ Interview with Princeton alumna W1, November 14, 2014.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Interview with Princeton alumna W7, March 6, 2014.

I had no idea what it was like during the day... Personally I never really found the street to be meaningful interaction... but I think now that's changed a lot since now I am in a club, and generally when I go to *my* club I see the same set of people... so it's easy for me to talk about things or just chill and hang out and play games... So I'd say now it's a lot different in a good way, just because I'm getting more out of being in a club.²⁷

Another aspect of these comments and descriptions of experiences that begins to become clear is these subjects are, whether subconsciously or consciously, drawing boundaries with their statements between their club and other clubs, as well as between days in their club and nights out on the street. This is one of the reasons membership becomes such a distinct and unique experience for new members. As underclassmen, the only experience the majority of students have is on nights when the clubs are 'open' and parties are held in their taprooms. These experiences are, in fact, remarkably different, which I will explain in more detail in the next section about these nights. Overall, it became overwhelmingly clear throughout the course of this project that members enjoy being a part of their club and being in the "safe" social and physical space of the house they belong in. The members who participated in my survey and interviews have expressed only positive sentiments about their day-to-day experiences in their clubs.

²⁷ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

Part 3: Events

Section 2: Nights Open/On Tap

The most common experience undergraduate students have with eating clubs is the nights that the clubs are “on tap,” meaning literally that their tap room systems are on and students are allowed to come in and drink as much beer as desired (within reason, as the bouncers and officers will and do send people home when they catch that people have been drinking too much). Until the late 1980s, clubs were essentially allowed to serve alcohol whenever they wanted, but from then through the present they are on tap three nights a week. Two of these nights are open, and one is typically a members-only night. The transition was dictated by a “written, unwritten agreement” between the clubs and the university referred to as the “Gentlemen’s Agreement” outlining these rules.²⁸ Most clubs are open Thursday and Saturday nights, and each club has different nights of the week that are members’ nights (Cap does Mondays, TI does Wednesday, several clubs do Tuesday, etc.). Some clubs, notably Charter and recently Colonial, are open on Fridays for the purpose of ‘getting’ students who want to go out on those nights rather than or in addition to Thursdays and Saturdays. When students are initiated into an eating club, they get a club sticker on their student ID, and this is how members get into their clubs when they are on tap and have bouncers at the door. If you are a member in a club, you can get into the club at any time, regardless of how crowded the party is. In fact, some clubs will let members in through another door if the crowd waiting to get in to the front is too large, though this is rare. Guests have a series of different ways to get into clubs. For the most part, sign-in clubs let people in on a PU ID basis, meaning students can show up with their student ID and be allowed in to the club until the taproom space reaches capacity, at which point the

²⁸ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

bouncers largely let people in on a one in, one out basis. Bicker clubs typically operate on a pass system or a list system. To get on a list, you would use social connections to persuade a member to put your name on the guest list for that night, which is then printed out and given to the bouncers. Passes are the size of business cards, are stamped with each individual club's logo, and printed on different color paper. Each member gets two passes in each color, and each night open is assigned a different color. Each member may bring two guests, so the club ideally operates the way a formal private club would. However, these systems do not always work as intended. A member could easily add names to a list or give passes to students with whom they have no intention of attending their club. This often occurs on a night when they do not go out at all. Even so, these procedures aim to be social controls to ensure that guests have some connection to the membership. Another aspect of these gatekeeping procedures that stands out is the clubs' hiring of bouncers. Club bouncers are typically regular employees that work for the same club each weekend. Members and other students frequently become familiar with these men, and members, especially officers, can develop relatively close relationships with these bouncers over the years.

Once inside, students may drop off extra clothes and belongings in the coat rooms (the houses truly are mansions), then head downstairs into the basements to the tap rooms to get beer. Most commonly the beer is the cheapest kegs, with brands such as Keystone or Milwaukee's Best. The clubs are allowed to serve only beer (or on special occasions hard cider) on open nights, with hard liquor being reserved for members-only formal events. Once in the taproom and away from the bar, there are typically two options for activities. On any reasonably crowded night, the primary function of the tap room (in the clubs where it is large enough, otherwise the dining room is usually used) is to turn in to a dance club. Officers play music over the sound

systems and everyone dances together. Otherwise, many basements are stocked with long tables for drinking games (typically including Beirut, beer pong, flip cup, etc.).

These open nights are one of the most interesting aspects of eating clubs for two reasons. The first is the fact that institutions that are essentially (though unofficially) approved by the university provide free-flowing alcohol for a student population that is approximately seventy-five percent underage. This is puzzling, as is the great volume of alcohol consumed by students at these houses. It is remarkable that the clubs are allowed to operate in this way. My research provides partial explanation of this phenomenon. One student's remarks speak to this:

There was a new [chief] of the Princeton police department. And he hated the eating clubs and was determined to take them down. So every single president of the eating clubs on the street got arrested for four years straight... handcuffed, put in the squad car, and driven to the jail at least once a year... [the clubs footed] the bills for this... So the eating clubs put pressure on the university, the university put pressure on the police department, the police chief gets kicked out, [they] bring in a new one, [and it] doesn't happen anymore.²⁹

The university's version of this story reads a little differently. Newspapers reported that a new police chief took strides to crack down on underage drinking in Princeton and set up new rules and wristband policies to prevent underage students from accessing alcohol.³⁰ He served as police chief of Princeton for three and a half years before the university offered him a position in the department of public safety. Regardless, it is clear that the eating clubs, when allied with the university, are in some sense above municipal rules. This is not unique to Princeton; many private schools have their own safety/police force that enforces different rules than do the surrounding police forces. More common aspects of this experience are schools that do not write

²⁹ Interview with history project member M2, November 8, 2014.

³⁰ Hersh, Matthew. 2005. Borough police chief takes senior spot at PU public safety. *Town Topics*, January 12, 2005.

drinking tickets when called about a student disturbance but rather shut down parties by making everyone leave. Furthermore, students at Princeton and other private schools are frequently taken to on-campus health facilities when a bouncer or student leader can tell that they have had far too much to drink. This is preferable to other locations where students would have to pay the ambulance and emergency room bills at a regular hospital, frequently getting a drinking ticket along the way. Yet this system is also safer because removing serious consequences for treatment leads to students being far more likely to call a safety officer for a friend, or help escort them to medical care. These nuances in creating safer drinking policies will be discussed further in the conclusion. In sum, the college and police are perfectly well aware of what happens on Thursday and Saturday nights at the eating clubs, the same way the police on some level must be aware of what happens at fraternity parties at other schools. But in Princeton, the activities are somewhat more sanctioned because the clubs are so powerful. In addition, it is well understood that students are not going to stop drinking alcohol altogether if they cannot get it in a club. Working with the clubs to create safe spaces has thus been the main priority of most officials in the past few decades.

Another reason these “on-tap” nights are an interesting part of this project is the gendered and sexual dimensions of the socialization that occurs. These were brought up by nearly every interviewee. The women clearly stated they ‘feel their gender most’ during these times. This is remarkable, because the dance-floor interactions are the least unique thing about eating clubs at Princeton from my perspective as an undergraduate student who has visited somewhere between seven and ten other universities in a social capacity. The language used to describe drunken encounters, being hit on in dark crowds, ‘grinding’ as dancing with others, and ‘dance floor

make outs' is something that I have heard an endless flow of concerning fraternity parties, dance clubs, and even about larger house parties during my entire undergraduate career. However, Princeton students do not typically or frequently use this language in reference to any other events, suggesting that these types of encounters are rare in other contexts.

One of the best ways to describe interactions between intoxicated male and female students at eating clubs is to relate a story told to me by one of my female interviewees.

When I was a sophomore... I got super drunk at a pregame... I don't remember getting to [the club] or being there really at all. But apparently I was making out with this guy like all over the club, and one of my friends told me the next day, 'oh yeah, I saw you with him... you looked really out of it, and you kind of like didn't answer [me], and you left to hook up with this guy.' Things could have been a lot worse than they were, so I'm glad... it's scary to think of how that could have ended... A lot of his friends teased me about that... I think that's something that is like a very particular experience that girls would have in eating clubs, but in society more generally, probably.³¹

This experience is far from unique; in fact, I have witnessed almost every single one of my college friends participate in an interaction similar to this. It is the classic "dance floor make out" scenario that is colloquially referred to as "DFMO" and a regular occasion of many drinkers' weekends. These causal 'hookups' sparked by "a blend of music, and just bodies everywhere, and people grinding with each other"³² are the subject of inquiry into our generation and identified as the dominant sexual trope of millennials' live experiences. While this might be true to some degree, and the gendered dynamics are certainly worth discussing, it is important to be clear that eating club tap rooms are not microcosms of the millennial experience, but rather simply have other parallels in frat houses and dance clubs across college towns and cities. These places are certainly not where the majority of college students' social interactions occur, and

³¹ Interview with Princeton alumna W1, November 14, 2014.

³² Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

random hookups are the minority in sexual interactions. The reason they warrant so much space in this project is how prominent these places and nights are in the average Princeton undergraduate's life in particular, given the clubs' pervasiveness as the only existing social sphere. This indicates that even if students themselves do not engage in this behavior, they frequently see or hear about others doing so. The differences in these interactions can be drawn along gendered lines, as has been pointed out by many researchers. For example, it has been shown that women feel a much higher level of guilt about casual sexual interactions, whereas men may be socially allowed to feel proud to increase the number of women they have been with or taken home.³³ In terms of the male experience, one respondent commented, "It's more acceptable for guys to be visibly on the prowl for hookups,"³⁴ implying that the expression of male sexuality is not only more accepted, but is socially privileged to the point that it can create discomfort among women observers. In fact, one student described a tap room that both spatially creates and socially utilizes a particularly discomforting power dynamic between the older males and the underclassmen females that seems to fit especially well with the phrase 'on the prowl.'

Since the taproom is below ground, the windows don't start until like 5-6 feet up [with] 15-20 foot ceilings... so there's huge window sills... and it's really common for the male members to sit up in these windows for large chunks of time in the party. And it's really weird because they have lots of women, mostly underclassmen, come up and talk to them and bring them beer and stuff. And it's weird because there's this huge physical gradient between the two, since the guys are sitting really high above the party, and they see all the people below partying and doing their general debauchery, and they're just sitting there...³⁵

³³ *Sex and sexuality in a feminist world* 2009. Eds. Katherine A. Hermes, Karen A. Ritzenhoff. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.

³⁴ Interview with Princeton alumna W1, November 14, 2014.

³⁵ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

As a young woman myself, I cannot imagine an evident power dynamic that is more disconcerting for female-identifying undergraduates. This is even more disturbing when one takes into account that this club is the same one in which women do not need to follow the standard gatekeeping procedures described above but rather act much more like one would at a typical frat house: “there’s a bouncer who’s very well known... girls can just go up to him...and like give him a hug and he lets them in. So girls can always get in... and guys need passes.”³⁶ Inside this taproom, then, junior and senior male members are physically above and supervising the actions of a crowd that is disproportionately underclassmen girls, some of whom have agreed to do their bidding over the course of the night. This is certainly not typical of most taproom experiences but is important because many students are aware of this dynamic and refer to it as an example of how nights at the clubs are often by far the most acutely gendered experiences students have at Princeton. Given the fact that students at Princeton are not immune to the “I drank way too much and went home with a boy I just met or barely knew” experience, these power dynamics between older members and underclassmen are key considerations in terms of possible interfaces. The potential for this type of interaction could be a large factor in why all of the non-member upperclassmen who participated in my survey reported that eating clubs reinforced a gender binary,³⁷ whereas only an average of 50% of members agreed. This suggests that experiences of clubs that are limited to these nights out as opposed to experiences that also include regular day to day activities are significantly different, especially in terms of gender identities.³⁸ Conversations over breakfast and brunch meals the morning after a particularly crazy night often revolved largely around who had been seen hooking up and/or going home with

³⁶ Interview with Princeton alumna W1, November 14, 2014.

³⁷ Described as “A male/female dichotomy in self-identification, expressions, actions, dress, etc.”

³⁸ Questions 19 and 8 in survey, Appendix 1.

whom, but this was the only meal in an average week that I ever heard reference these activities. This illustrates how singular the taproom experience is to the weekend nights, but it is important to keep in mind how non-members experience many of these nights, while for club members they are only a small portion of their time at the houses.

As an undergraduate who has been to such parties at about a half dozen clubs, and parties at around fifteen fraternities across a half dozen universities, I am in a position to assert that these parties are remarkably similar. The male/female ratio, however, often depends heavily on the school. In the eating clubs, it is far closer to 50/50 due to standardized entrance procedures into the party. The experiences that Princeton students have described to me, and those I have personally experienced there, are actually closest to the most crowded private house parties I have attended than to frat parties due to the equal inclusion of various demographics within the student attendees as well as the prevalence of drinking games in addition to dancing and hook ups. This similarity is noteworthy in its relative significance to other, more unique features of the clubs, precisely because it has been expressed as either the only or the most acute experience of gender that each of the women I interviewed could think of. While the experiences described in this section would hardly be worth discussing in an undergraduate social life like the one I am familiar with, they stand out as unbalanced in power and in social reaction to Princeton students. This implies a more equal playing field in other social interactions among gender identities, which I will explore in the next set of events.

Part 3: Events

Section 3: Lawnparties

The first major event I attended at Princeton was the 2012 Spring Lawnparties event. The basic premise of this event, which occurs once each semester, is that each eating club has a concert in their front or back yard, or ‘lawn.’ These happen at various time intervals throughout the morning and early afternoon, with the headliner performance happening in the mid-afternoon in the biggest outdoor space on the street. The basic procedures are that any student can buy a wristband for themselves and a guest, which you receive using your photo ID on the morning of the event. Anyone wearing a wristband is allowed to enter the sectioned-off yards that are having public concerts. These wristbands are not simply the colored paper ones typically used at bag checks in athletic arenas. They are a high quality, thick plastic, with shimmery dotted patterns, different bright colors every semester, and has “Lawnparties Spring/Fall 20XX” printed in large letters. Among other things, this helps prevent their duplication. Fall Lawnparties is on the first Sunday of the semester, and spring is on the last Sunday of the semester. This maximizes the chance of good weather for an outdoor event. The schedule also aligns with the school workloads of students, which tend to be lowest at these points in the semester. The spring event is the Sunday of the “houseparties” weekend that runs Friday-Saturday-Sunday (Formal, Semi-Formal, and Lawnparties, respectively).

But there is so much more to these events than concerts. One of my consultants described the concerts as “basically an accessory.”³⁹ Rules among the student body that one would call ‘unwritten’ but are quite well known and frequently spoken about.

³⁹ Interview with GW senior M4, October 30, 2014.

One such rule is that you must be extremely intoxicated. Exceptions are made only for the alcohol intolerant or others who do not ever drink. As one of my out-of-town interviewees remarked, “the most interesting part of Lawnparties for me is that it's literally everyone that gets wasted, not some or even most... everyone. M [a student allergic to alcohol] is the only person I've ever seen sober after noon.”⁴⁰ Depending on a students' age/year in school, their manner of pregaming (to drink alcohol before attending an event or social function)⁴¹ will differ. First-years and sophomores largely attend events hosted by members of fraternities, sororities, sports teams, dance groups, or their other similar groups. These are found in various dorm rooms across campus in the early morning (typically, students start drinking between 9-9:30am), or in rare cases in off-campus greek apartments. Once a member of an eating club, or a guest of a member, however, a student likely begins his or her morning with brunch there, complete with full buffets of food and bars of champagne drinks. Most clubs then stay on tap for their members throughout the day. It is difficult to exaggerate the volume of alcohol consumed on these days; this event is, for many students and guests, one of the drunkest days they will have all year. I found it common to encounter people who had blacked out from binge drinking on these days. Indeed, all of my friends and acquaintances who have ever attended this event over the years report that, at least once, they have done so. This is not unique to this event or to Princeton. Students would likely report the same thing about Halloween or the last day of class at UNC, and most students who drink alcohol would report drinking to this degree on their spring breaks, summer breaks, and study abroad trips. Princeton Lawnparties are fascinating in comparison because they are so concentrated in time and space, and they are laden with many layers of social significance. The

⁴⁰ Interview with GW senior M4, October 30, 2014.

⁴¹ Oxford dictionaries: Pregame. In Oxford University Press [database online]. Oxford Dictionaries, [cited 3/17] Available from http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/pregame.

university is aware (though unofficially) of this happening, and they provide free food (examples include soft pretzels, Taco Bell, Jimmy Johns, Italian Ice, corn dogs, and ice cream.) These food choices may have been made to mitigate the effects of drinking and hot weather. One of the most remarkable things about Lawnparties at Princeton is not only the normalization of alcohol consumption, but also the manner in which it is *expected* by everyone that students will become highly intoxicated. Indeed, “its people making you binge drink. Either through peer pressure or drinking games or [chugging contests].”⁴² The intense level of intoxication is also something that is maintained throughout the day, meaning that while a student might drink in the morning, then go to the street to see a band who is playing at 11:30 am, they would probably go back to their room or their club after that concert to drink more before returning for the headliner concert, because they want to ensure that they are ‘drunk enough.’

To provide a better look into Lawnparties, I will describe two from my own experience: my first, spring 2012, and my most recent, fall 2014.

Spring 2012 was our first year in college, so my boyfriend was living in his residential college, Whitman. It was the first time I had ever been to Princeton, so there was a lot of pressure for me to perform well in social situations, that is, to make his friends like me when they met me, which accentuated the intensity of the desire to dress and drink correctly. We woke up early that morning so I could straighten my hair and put makeup on. We then gathered with everyone on his hall to take photos, another key element, as this is a highly photographed event. We then left the group, because my boyfriend had gotten us wristbands to brunch at Quadrangle Club through his fraternity brothers. This was a huge privilege not only because first-years typically do not get

⁴² Interview with GW senior M4, October 30, 2014.

to attend events like this, but also because it was at the eating club with the biggest lawn, meaning the headliner was in the same building (especially because that semester the headliner was Childish Gambino, the rapper alter ego of comedy star Donald Glover, popular amongst our peers that year). At brunch, we had basically unlimited champagne, but my boyfriend's "big" from his fraternity also brought bottles of vodka for the whole table to spike drinks or take shots with. After brunch, we went and saw a few of the other concerts on the street, met up with friends, grabbed some free Taco Bell, and then started making plans to meet up for the headline concert. Having a wristband from brunch allowed us to be inside Quad again, meaning we could stay and watch the opening act from the upper floors, as well as continue to be handed liquor all day (from acquaintances, not from the club itself). We met up with friends in the huge, drunk, dancing mosh pit that is the backyard headlining concert (see Appendix 3), and after it was over, returned to the dining hall at the residential college for dinner before falling asleep by 7 pm.

Fall 2014 was the beginning of senior year. My boyfriend was an officer living in the Cap and Gown Club. We also had a couple of friends visiting from out of town for the event, a common occurrence across the student body, and something that illustrates the draw of the day is not the musicians but the drinking event, as the performers are not announced until around a week prior. Indeed, our friend told me that the way he thinks about Lawnparties is that he's "going to go regardless of the performer."⁴³ Starting the morning in the officer's living room, we poured drinks as we were getting ready between 9:30 and 10 am. Being inside the club in the morning has its advantages, as there is no travel time to get to brunch, and if you are with an officer, there is an essentially unlimited supply of alcohol. Once downstairs for brunch, the dining hall is milling with people walking in for the food buffet and the champagne buffet, most

⁴³ Interview with GW senior M4, October 30, 2014.

people sitting in the backyard where the band/music is (this particular semester one of the officers deejayed) as it is usually one of the last really warm days of the year. The fall semester has an air of reconnection about it. Because it is the beginning of the school year, people get together and party to catch up with one another and forget the copious amounts of work the semester will bring. After spending a good portion of the morning with the champagne bar (tended by underclassmen – this will be discussed in the bicker section), the group ventured out onto the street to see some of the front lawn parties. After attending this event for several years, most older students do not actually spend much time at the concerts unless the artist is a particular favorite of theirs, because the crowds are so tightly packed and wild. Personally, I have lost two different pairs of sandals, a toenail, and two pairs of cheap sunglasses during the events, which is not uncommon. My friends have lost baseball hats, ties, and flasks. They have suffered ripped clothes and bruises from the jostling crowds. Not being interested in the headlining concert, our group returned to our club to tap a keg in the taproom, play drinking games, climb onto the balcony, and have our out-of-town guests take a quick nap before heading to the train to drop them off. Both of them admit to not remembering everything that happened that day.

Given all of this, it may come as a surprise that the other major rule of Lawnparties concerns clothing: be dressed nicely, in fancy, preppy clothes; sundresses for the girls and pastel separates for the boys. Essentially, it is expected by most that you look ready for the Kentucky Derby (without the hats – they would get lost in the crowds at the concerts). There is not only a huge amount of pressure (the first few times I went I sent pictures of several dress options for my boyfriend to check with his friends which would be the best to wear), but is so widely known and expected that the level of preppiness required of males has become an internet meme (this and

photos of typical female attire are included in Appendix 3). This is not something that is deviated from as far as I have seen, and is explicitly conveyed. One of our out-of-town guests actually purchased a new outfit for the event (as I have done multiple times) because the other guest who had attended in previous years described this to him.⁴⁴

An interesting facet of this expectation is that there is a small group of people who, instead of button downs, wear oversized sports jerseys. This look comes from West Coast fraternity style (as I understand from those I have asked), as opposed to the Southern wealthy fraternity style. These two seemingly opposed styles actually clearly reveal the deeper social perspective of students about the day. One of my interviewees said it concisely: “You’re not a Princeton student that day. You’re someone at a different school... You’re supposed to imitate something.”⁴⁵ This gets at the heart of why this day in particular involves such an intense level of binge drinking (and for some, drugs such as marijuana, molly, and others are certainly not out of the question). It is rooted in many students’ desire to escape. The whole charade is partially about the social performance of pretending to be someone else – someone at a school that demands less of you, where the party never stops for studying, where you dress a certain way and drink a certain way. This is their day, from their perspective, to drink and party until they forget the stresses of an Ivy League education. Lawnparties is, to them, the main opportunity to prove their status as a “work hard, play hard” school, and to showcase that they do both even harder than every other university with this cultural lexicon.

I feel it is necessary to remark upon the fact that the “SoCal frat style” I have described is something that generally applies only to men, and women are more strictly expected to adhere to the ‘preppy’ and typically more expensive fashion guidelines. Women are indeed subject to

⁴⁴ Conversation with subjects, September 13, 2014.

⁴⁵ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

stricter informal social controls in this, as in every case. While these styles are not an actual formal requirement (you can of course still get your wristband and attend the concerts regardless of your clothes), one simply would not dress outside of the social regulations, because deviating is more of a hassle than simply dressing to fit in. In fact, I have seen girls attempt to be ‘alternative’ in some ways by wearing shorts or pants instead of a dress or skirt, and I have heard people ask them why they chose to wear what they did. The combination of all of these particular yet overarching socially expected details lends itself well to theory discussions of everyday performance. As Morris’s cataloguing of anthropological performative theory suggests, the importance of outer presentation and the self-awareness of social forces that dictate these performances are something anthropology as a field is uniquely suited to assess (Morris 1995). From the students’ perspectives, the day is designed and experienced as a social outlet to be someone they are not. However, if that is the case, the question must be raised as to why the outward performance of this difference is so limited in expectation and appearance. In many ways, I have felt my gender more acutely in the expectation that I wear a sundress and have my hair and makeup done well for photographs than I feel my identity in many other experiences both at Princeton and elsewhere. This is also a uniform that requires students and guests to embody the ideals and appearances of the elite, reminding them subconsciously of the institutionalized whiteness of wealth in America. Instead of escaping the primary social labels that dictate our experience, the event defines our appearances even more strictly. The issue of attire is the only aspect of Lawnparties that feels particularly gendered, as the expectation of intoxication and participating in brunch and drinking games is based more on age and membership. While the requirement of dressing ‘properly’ for the event is felt equally intensely

across genders, men have more options, and women as always feel the social gaze of judgment for being incorrect more strongly.

Another fascinating aspect of the Lawnparties events is the use of space to create social exclusion through formal boundaries. As discussed above, each student wears a wristband to have access to the open concerts that are formally a part of the university event, but a slight majority of students are also wearing other wristbands that allow them access to one of the clubs for brunch and throughout the day. While the overt purpose of these controls is to control the distribution of alcohol, they also function to create certain levels of elite participation and are physical markers of which club one is associated with (or if one is not associated with any). For example, if I am wearing a Lawnparties wristband and a Cap wristband, I will be allowed past the bouncer to get into the yard at Cannon, but would absolutely be stopped at the front door or thrown out if I was seen with alcohol there. Once I leave that concert, however, I would be able to go get a drink from the Cap taproom and play games in the backyard. This primary level of control is not remarkably different from the level of control and exclusion on regular nights and events, but the spatial relation of the included to the excluded is much more in the forefront of experience in this case. A common sight on these days is to see students (club members and guests) sitting on roofs, balconies, window ledges, etc. hanging physically out of the houses, watching the crowds below (as can be seen in Appendix 3). Being able to use the building this way is a privilege of those included by the social institution it houses. This dynamic also creates a more concrete expression of difference and exclusion. If in the crowd, one can see those with more access physically above oneself, and once noticed, realize that they have a full view of everything that is happening by and around them. Though this dynamic is generally unremarked upon, and after a few years students do not appear to really notice it any more, it is in some ways

a blatant difference in social power. This is most clearly seen at Quad, which has the biggest back yard, and thus annually houses the headlining concerts. During the rest of the year, Quad is not a particularly popular or spoken about club, making Lawnparties their chance to shine. As seen in the photo in Appendix 3, the rear face of Quad is full of balconies, making their house prime real estate to watch both the concert and the gigantic crowd in attendance. This spatial dimension allows them to subvert their typical place in the social hierarchy of the eating clubs for the specific purpose of the event. The space of the club becomes most desirable, in turn increasing the level of exclusivity that members and guests maintain for that day.

“Every college has their special thing that they talk about,”⁴⁶ and Princeton’s is eating clubs. Eating clubs’ special thing is Lawnparties, their infamous day of bringing up-and-coming musical stars along with throwback hits to their front yards. And yet, the concerts were described as being “a justification of the drinking.”⁴⁷ From the perspective of Princeton students, Lawnparties is the one day a semester where you dress well, are drunk by 10:30 am, and after that anything goes. Breaking down the details of social expectations and boundaries, however, reveals a set of carefully crafted social interactions meant both to represent “the other” to them and to restructure and reinforce their day-to-day membership hierarchy.

⁴⁶ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

⁴⁷ Conversation with GW senior M4, March 12, 2015.

Part 3: Events

Section 4: Formals and Semi-Formals

Another type of event hosted by eating clubs are formals. Formals and semi-formals themselves are not unique to Princeton, and the majority of the details (their purpose, what happens) is not particularly different from formals or semi-formals elsewhere. Examples of other college organizations with the same events are fraternities, sororities, sports teams, and ROTC programs. Other schools have cocktails or date events for greek life, musical groups, and other smaller student organizations. The basic format of these kinds of events, including those at Princeton, begins with getting dressed in traditionally fancier clothes, going to dinner with a group of attendees, often with alcoholic drinks, then attending the event. There, either a DJ or band plays on a dance floor, and students dance with their dates and talk to friends. Given this, I will do my best in this section not to describe the particular happenings of the dancing/music portion of the formal events at eating clubs (as in the previous sections) but rather to focus on the details that make Princeton's events unique, as well as on the discourse from the participants in this study. While semi-formals happen more frequently, I will not discuss in length the events in part because they are typically simply formals with a buffet meal or just hors d'oeuvres rather than a full meal.

Each club on Prospect Ave has a winter formal at the beginning of December before break as well as a spring formal in the beginning of May, as part of the Houseparties weekend that also contains spring Lawnparties. The clubs typically have a formal event sometime else in the fall, but they do not occur at the same time, and oftentimes can be themed in particular ways with specific activities (i.e. Casino Night – see Appendix 3). Formals are one of the only events that unites the street in the same procedures; members are all allowed to attend and bring one

guest. At the events, you are marked as a member or guest of a member by wristbands. While there are strict expectations of appropriate attire for these events drawn down a gender binary, this is not unique to the Princeton events. As such, I will remark only that in my experience, the formals and semi-formals at Princeton are actually *less* formal than those at other locations. For example, a relatively small number of women wear long/full-length gowns to formals, which at many other schools or kinds of formal events would be the vast majority of dresses. Senior W19 at UNC, in a sorority, has worn only long dresses to her formals over the past four years. In some sense, this makes the emphasis on attire less strong at these events, and in my experience, the pressure is more about conducting oneself in accordance with social expectations to drink and party in the expected manner.

What makes Princeton formals unique? Simply put: the food and drinks happen in the club, prior to and throughout the music and dancing typically considered to be the “formal” itself. At other schools, organizations wishing to have these events must rent out actual venues, and the majority of them do not allow any alcohol consumption, so students pregame if they wish to drink. This puts more emphasis on interactions between dates, and locates the pressure more on physical appearance and social performance. Eating club formals have a lot of learned social patterns that I will describe below, but because the drinking continues through the night, and because the events are members and guests only, it is not too far removed from many of the other events: members binge drinking and partying together in the house. Indeed, as one member described them; “they’re just a chance for people to bring close friends around the club, who may not be members... just to have something different and dress up.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

The full, sit-down meal is what separates the ‘formals’ from the ‘semi-formals’ and other such events. The night of formals begins with cocktails (served by underclassmen) and typically hors d’oeuvres, and then everyone with an ‘over 21’ wristband gets their own bottle of wine (some years specially labelled - see Appendix 3) before sitting down at their individual place card at the long tables that are set up in the dining halls, and frequently in their lawns under large, rented event tents. In fact, these formals and the tents they require are so integral to the clubs that, as one of the grad board members integral to the building process said, when Cap was added on to in 2011, “[she] was a big advocate for making the outdoor space really nice... [they] worked hard to make sure the dimensions were good for a tent.”⁴⁹ Indeed, the stone courtyard that makes the backyard patio of the house is the exact dimensions of the party tent they rent for fall and winter formals as well as the Houseparties and reunions weekends in the summer (see photo in Appendix 3).

One of the practices that makes eating club formals unique is the manner in which attendees are expected to behave during dinner – primarily, by standing up and chugging their glasses of wine by category. Essentially, as soon as everyone is seated for dinner, groups, and frequently everyone in the room, will start chanting, in the form of ‘_____ chug!’ where the blank is filled with a particular category of people. This could range anywhere from “non-members” to “juniors” to specific dance groups, sports teams, etc. By the end of dinner, groups will start targeting individual people, so “Mary Jane chug! Mary Jane chug!” for example. When the label applies to you, you have to stand up and finish your glass. This ritual happens at all the clubs’ formals, and is so well known that guests are immediately reminded that when they sit down they should not fill their glass all the way in preparation for the next time they must finish

⁴⁹ Interview with alumna W7, March 6, 2014.

their drinks. As one out of town guest remarked, “Nowhere I’ve ever been does the wine thing... it goes back to what I was saying about people making you drink... most people there didn’t know me, and I still had to chug the wine.”⁵⁰ This series of public identification and alcohol consumption is remarkable to me for many reasons. Its universality on the street is a primary reason, given the huge differences in other alcohol procedures between clubs. For example, some clubs such as Cannon and Terrace do not serve hard alcohol at any events, but other clubs such as Quad have an open bar with cocktails at all of their formal events, available for the majority of the event. Yet, every club’s formal (as far as I have ever heard) participates in this wine chug routine, despite the fact that its popularity is varied – it gives the officers (who have to clean up the club) quite a headache, and certainly overshadows the hard work of the chefs. Another aspect of the wine chugs worth noting is how particularly non-discriminatory they are. Everyone, regardless of age, membership, gender, race, or any other division is expected to participate in the exact same way (though all of those divisions can and will be used to make individuals do so). This is not cocktail hour, where one drink might be more “girly” than another, nor is it late nights in tap rooms, where hookup culture manifests. Every person, at every table, must drink in this specifically social manner. What I have always found the most fascinating about this ritual as an outsider is the manner in which this universality combines with the specific identities that the labels represent to reveal the diversity of each club’s membership. In this sense, the formals dinner experience is truly singular in its ability to illustrate just how diverse (or in the case of some clubs, not diverse) the cross-section of the student body at the event truly is. At the Cap and Gown winter formals I attended in the course of this project (December 2014), I realized that several people with whom I was already acquainted were performers in popular dance and a

⁵⁰ Interview with GW senior M4, March 8, 2014.

capella groups, met someone who writes for the New York Times, discovered other North Carolinians, and found out that several people who I had met in previous years had actually already graduated (alumni chug). The categorization can, predictably, have both divisive and solidifying effects between and among different social identities. There is a sense of solidarity when you are made to stand up for being an out-of-town guest, and across the dining hall you can visually interact with other outsiders in a larger way that would not be discovered in more intimate social interactions; it is likely I would not have met these people otherwise. This dynamic of connection, however, only exists once inside the event. Clearly these social labels operate on multiple levels, but curiously, this is not something that I have ever heard students discuss. For the most part, they assume the chug activity as a given tradition in which they must participate without any real question.

Most members of clubs enjoy the exclusivity of formal events as a fun and special occasion to share within their membership, and multiple interviewees made comments that they do not feel uncomfortable with the exclusive access to these events because every club has them, regardless of if they are bicker or sign-in,⁵¹ and guests are allowed, so theoretically any student who knows someone could technically attend. But one student had an opposing opinion: “It’s one of the few times of the year where non-club-members feel really isolated from the street. Like all 11 clubs are having these lavish parties and they’re all private, and everyone wants to come. So there’s always clamoring for guest spots...”⁵² It is this social dynamic of desiring an invitation to belong that can make formals an uncomfortable experience in the social hierarchy of the street. One of the earlier formals, for example, had an incredibly awkward non-member chug, given that a group of close friends had all successfully joined a bicker club, but one of them had

⁵¹ W14, W15 in interviews with author.

⁵² Princeton senior M2 in communication with author, January 18th, 2015.

bickered unsuccessfully (been ‘hosed’) and therefore was the guest of one of the new members. In this sense, these events overall can be strong reminders of a failure to achieve social inclusion, rather than a celebration of membership.

Regardless of the various opinions about the exclusivity of formals and semi-formals, they are the several primary events of each eating club’s academic year, and are of interest because of their neutrality concerning social markers of difference in relation to the other events discussed here. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the drinking rituals and their overt reference to particular identities and categories need to be examined separately in order to gain a fuller understanding of the practices of undergraduate students as members of eating clubs and the social roles they are required to exhibit.

Part 3: Events

Section 5: Bicker/Joining a Club

As previously mentioned, sophomore (and more rarely, junior) students can join the clubs either by the sign-in process for open clubs and the bicker process for selective clubs. During the first week of the spring semester (early February), eligible students register on the Inter-Club Council website for the joining process. This can begin with signing in to an open club if you are sure that it is the one you want to join, or registering for the bicker events at an exclusive club. If you participate in bicker events, you attend a club for events on a Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. After this point, you rank the clubs you are interested in in order that you want to join them⁵³, including both selective and open clubs. After this second round of joining, you will either be offered membership into the club you bickered, or your top choices in the system. If after this point you had only ranked the bicker club you wanted and were ‘hosed’ (rejected), you then have the opportunity to sign-in to any open club with remaining spots on a rolling basis. In the past few years, all of the open clubs had extra spots at this stage except for Terrace. If you do not get into the club that you wanted, you also have the option of not joining any, and going through the process in your junior fall semester at a much smaller scale. At face value, this system does not appear to be controversial in any significant way, but to the contrary, the bicker system is the most widely criticized and popularly disdained aspect of eating clubs.

In the terms of critics, bicker is the way that exclusive clubs exclude people they do not approve of. Bicker is incredibly unpopular outside of the eating club system, and is the primary reason that popular media condemns the clubs as archaically elitist. It has even sparked a small

⁵³ Interclub Council. Timeline for 2015. 2015. Available from <http://princetoneatingclubs.org/timeline/>.

movement amongst student dissidents called “Hose Bicker”⁵⁴ in reference to hosing being the term used to define being rejected for membership. The way the process actually works is that prospective members attend three days’ worth of events in which they have the opportunity to meet members through casual conversation, games, and other structured interactions. Then, the clubs have three nights of discussion, where each potential new member is discussed by the entire club (or a quorum) and then voted on. From this perspective, the bicker process does feel shallow and unfair in some sense – how can over 100 people have any real sense of a person after a few conversations and activities? And yet, many people respond by asking what other viable alternatives there are to create a community. My aim in this section is to give several viewpoints on bicker and to explain the process and effect of joining eating clubs, but it is important to clearly state that as the most controversial topic in this project, I would not go as far to imply that any viewpoints expressed by respondents are representative of a larger social attitude as I feel many comments in other sections are. Bickering in particular, though technically a collective experience, is very individual in its affects and interpretations.

In defense of bicker, as one alumna pointed out, “realistically, you basically bicker to get into Princeton... The same thing is going to happen when you have to get a job, and at each stage of the game... there are any number of ways that you have to just go through a ritual to get to the next level.”⁵⁵ This sentiment is fairly common from those within bicker clubs in the sense that the system might be flawed, but it is not far removed from the way people are made to perform in specific ways to achieve anything, and no other viable options that determine membership compatibility have been offered. Members also defend bicker in other ways, saying that once they see the other side of it, as people who are choosing the new students who will be joining the

⁵⁴ <http://hosebicker.tumblr.com/>

⁵⁵ Interview with Princeton alumna W7, March 6, 2015.

club, it is much less intimidating and seems fairer. “I don’t think bicker is the real problem... It’s not like people are rating you... I really do think that even people who don’t know anyone who just come and are personable and funny... that people will like them,”⁵⁶ one student said to me concerning how she feels the selection process happens from the members’ point of view. As another commented, “members, in my experience on the other side of it, members don’t really care if you have a bad interaction or were a little bit weird or something, or awkward one time. That’s never really hurt people too badly.”⁵⁷ So it seems, at least from those I spoke to, that in reality the bicker process is essentially a casual week of events to get to know students and see if they are a good fit for the community.

If this is as true as it seems from these claims, then there is a large amount of undue stress felt by sophomores about their chances of getting in to the clubs they hope to. As one student remarked, “as soon as sophomores set foot on campus, all they’re thinking about is bicker all year... it’s a pretty universal feeling.”⁵⁸ He goes on to describe the various ways that sophomores will try to meet members and become known around the clubs they are interested in, but also points out that if you are too obvious in befriending someone for the sole purpose of getting in to your club of choice, it could backfire and hurt your chances. People use all sorts of connections to help themselves get in to their clubs, with the most obvious being sports teams, greek organizations, and other student groups funneling in their younger interested members (most prominently sports teams as they are typically larger, and therefore command more of the vote during discussions). But there are other ways of meeting people in any given club, the primary way being that many have sophomore events specifically geared at meeting potential new

⁵⁶ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

⁵⁷ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

members. There are more creative ways to get your foot in the door, so to speak, as one student explains about getting the opportunity to bartend at formal events: “I was able to bartend at their winter formals my sophomore year before bicker because I knew [the treasurer], and bartending is a great way to meet members... [it] was one of the things I did extra besides go to sophomore events that was to help me get in.”⁵⁹

Yet, even once you have some sort of connection, the actual process of bickering is nerve-racking for sophomores, as one gets the sense that a handful of interactions determines what people will say about you and ultimately decide about you during discussions. This extreme social experience is a common theme across many of my interviews, from one student’s description of the time as “oh god, people freak out... and get really uptight, and really nervous... it’s high pressure on the sophomores, it’s really high pressure, because you feel like you’re just being judged on every social interaction you have.”⁶⁰ Similarly, another current student describing bicker to me said, “You know you want to be in the club, and you know that this is your chance to meet people and get them to like you, so you can’t help but feel a little bit of pressure, so I think that was pretty stressful for me.”⁶¹ Clearly, this experience feels very high stakes, and potentially rightfully so, considering the drastic effects the final decision can have on a student, as one of my survey responses indicated by saying “I was hosed, and that experience was probably as bad as being in my eating club has been good.”⁶² Despite consisting of fairly causal interactions in many clubs, attempting to join a club remains an intense and nerve-racking ordeal. It is also a stage that bonds new member classes together through common experience (especially true after initiations and in some clubs that still have hazing rituals as well). The

⁵⁹ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Interview with Princeton junior M4, February 19, 2014.

⁶² Survey Interview, Anonymous Response to question 30. Full question and response in Appendix 1.

anxiety and strain on sophomore bicker participants bonds them together, as well as acts as the liminal phase necessary to be accepted into membership, allowing students to even out the power dynamic and control operated by older members during this time. This process can be especially stressful for women, as gendered dynamics play into this, as in every, social interaction and judgment. Women in bicker predictably have to deal with various double standards, as described by one female member:

Very attractive girls tend to do very well in spring bicker, as sophomores. The older guys are excited about getting them into the club, and as long as they don't do something that upsets the female half of the club – insofar as they wear really low-cut tops, and flashing their boobs everywhere, or... give sort of a fake vibe – then they do really well. I remember when I was bickering, I was told 'look cute, but don't do too much, otherwise girls won't like you.' So girls who are good-looking tend to do well in spring bicker; girls who are good-looking tend to do really poorly in fall bicker. My theory for why that is... you're being judged by a jury of your peers in that context, so it's juniors and seniors talking about juniors... [so] there's a feeling of competition that exists when you're dealing with people your same year that didn't exist when people were talking about letting in sophomores... [this] problem seems to be bigger for girls.⁶³

This is potentially the most fascinating claim I heard about the bicker and discussions process. I feel sure that many male members would disagree with the assertions this respondent made, but very frequently, subconscious attitudes such as those between girls and the advantage that traditionally attractive women may have are not realized as biases despite their prevalent role in affecting outcomes. The anecdotal advice included in this explanation on how to dress is another element that rings true in my experience about the double standard expected of young women's appearances. Choosing exactly what to wear and how to act is a conscious decision for students

⁶³ Interview with alumna W1, November 14, 2014.

in situations like this, and increases the already high levels of stress surrounding these key interactions.

Also interesting to me is the self-reported way that students choose which club to be interested in: by their stereotypes. “The stereotypes kind of guide you to a certain club, and the stereotypes to some extent are... I would say they’re fairly true.”⁶⁴ In some sense, this is not too surprising, because access into the worlds of the clubs is so intensely limited to underclassmen that without having a personal connection (for example, dating someone who is a member in a club), it would be difficult to discern the true underlying personality of the group. What stands out, then, is the way that the clubs manage to self-perpetuate the accuracy of their assigned stereotypes over time. One of my respondents has the benefit of having been involved in the system over a long period of time, and she spoke on this subject, saying, “The students themselves, each year, kind of perpetuate – I think what’s interesting is that as things go along, it’s kind of amazing how there are some stereotypes... it’s a little interesting how they have perpetuated over long periods of time.”⁶⁵ She goes on to mention some clubs that have not in the past several decades seen any major shifts in their stereotyped and actual demographic (Cannon, Colonial, Terrace, Ivy, TI, for example). These typecast social categories are in many cases used by the clubs to describe themselves, and are so pervasive that (as mentioned in the introductory section) I know them well enough to give three-quarters of the standard tour down Prospect Ave. Several of the selective clubs enjoy the connections that keep their membership tied in overarching categories, and this heavily affects the outcomes of discussions and voting on potential new members. These social feedback loops come to define clubs and can be difficult to change, especially if a group is not intentionally aiming to change clubs. An interesting

⁶⁴ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2014.

⁶⁵ Interview with alumna W7, March 6, 2015.

counterpoint to this, however, can be found in the case of Terrace, which has been known through its entire history as the ‘alternative’ club, an accurate label, and is an open club. Membership self-perpetuates through sheer popularity in this case, because current members do not hand pick the upcoming class as is seen in selective clubs. Terrace recently has been filling up so quickly from students signing in during the first available round that there are not spaces left in the later opportunities to join open clubs, which is unique from the rest of the open clubs – and is notable because it means all of their members are the students who did not participate in the bicker process whatsoever. Though this is, then, a unique case, it is interesting to consider in terms of stereotype self-perpetuation.

In the end, it is clear that joining a club is an experience both collective and individual. Some students do not disdain the bicker process, and I have heard innumerable times that there are people who have a lot of fun bickering, through playing games and meeting new people. On the other hand, there are many loud complaints that the system is discriminatory and elitist, as seen by the fact that 100% of non-member survey respondents “Strongly Disagree” that it is a good thing eating clubs are exclusive.⁶⁶ Those within the system point out that it is not very different from any interview process, and I will also remark that it is incredibly similar to the traditional “rush” process used to join sororities and fraternities. Many members discuss bicker as a sort of necessary evil, even though they too overwhelmingly disagree that the exclusivity is a good thing.⁶⁷ But they have to determine who will fit well in the club membership and have limited spots available, so until a truly more effective and equitable system is introduced, they settle for this.

⁶⁶ Question 18 on survey, see Appendix 1.

⁶⁷ Question 7 on survey, see Appendix 1.

Part 4: Leadership

Each eating club has an officer corps made up of undergraduate leaders. These officers are chosen shortly after the joining process each year, so they serve February of their junior year until February of their senior year (except in the case of some clubs having sophomore leaders to represent the entering membership class their sophomore spring). Officer roles vary from club to club, but each club generally has a set of top importance roles (with the top 3 being in order): President, Vice President, Treasurer, Social Chair, House Manager, and Bicker Chair (in the bicker clubs, of course). Most clubs also have various other roles like IM/Activities Chair, Tech Chair, Security Chair, etc. Some clubs have unique roles dealing with the activities specific to them. Terrace, for example, hosts many bands and musical performers every semester, so they have the role of Music Chair. Officers are both elected by the current junior and senior membership as well as appointed/nominated, depending on the position and the club. For example, one club elects only the top three positions (President, Vice President, and Treasurer), and the President then nominates the other officers.⁶⁸ On the other hand, most clubs' memberships elect the top 6-7 positions (the first list), and the president chooses who fills the other leadership roles, whether through individual appointment or a process of application and nomination.

Many of the officers live in the houses, with the number in each club with this privilege depending on the size of the officers' quarters in the house. The different cut-offs between how many officers a club has and how many of them are in the sort of 'top tier' created by the houses and elections makes it incredibly difficult to make any claims on statistics of representation or diversity. Which officers/leaders would one count? For this reason, there is a lot of focus on

⁶⁸ Interview with outgoing officer M2, November 8, 2014.

gender in the presidencies and vice presidencies in particular, and how frequently each club has a woman representing their institution. As can be seen in the chart in Appendix 4, the statistics of this recent history have a bleak outlook for women. Out of 158 presidents in the past fifteen years, only 26 were women (around 16%), and if you take Colonial out of the data, you find 19 women out of 143 presidents (only 13%). Also notable is that this data includes the most recent Presidential elections (from February 2015), and there are implications that some of these women were given extra weight in being pushed through the process in response to recent criticisms of the system and this leadership disparity. The data for the year prior (those elected in February 2014 who were in their positions when I began this project) reflects that there was only one female president on the street. Given that Princeton currently has an undergraduate population that is 49% female in the records, this certainly deserves the critical attention it has received.

Interestingly, some clubs have begun to institute requirements for gender representation that are less talked about due to the fact that they do not deal with these visible top positions. For example, at Cannon, since the club re-opened in 2011, it has been the policy to have at least one male social chair and one female social chair. However, regardless of these policies it has become very clear over the past decade that all leadership on the street is overwhelmingly male, and even more so than the historical norm. While many clubs had women presidents and other officers in the early 2000s, their presence dropped off to the point that the university itself began to question the lack of female representation in leadership, as ordered by then-president Shirley Tilghman (incidentally, the first woman president of Princeton, and only the second in the Ivy League). Since the release of the full report in 2011,⁶⁹ graduate boards and student leaders have

⁶⁹ The Steering Committee on Undergraduate Leadership. 2011. *Summary of findings and recommendations*. Princeton University: The Trustees of Princeton University.

responded to the popular pressure from the focus on gender in this report as well as in widely publicized scandals, both from real incidents and allegations, concerning gender on the street. This response has indeed increased the number of women serving as officers, though not yet to the equal level that would be representative of the student population. In fact, the website of the Princeton Prospect Foundation (the foundation supporting the clubs as non-profit institutions) remarks about coeducation that club membership averages around 50% female, and pointedly mentions that women are included in leadership by including the statistic, “there has been at least one female representing one of the clubs as president for the past 6 years.”⁷⁰ The inclusion of this fact in a paragraph about women’s inclusion is quite brazen, given that it also states the possibility that for the past six years, ten out of eleven clubs were represented by male presidents, despite having a population that is half female-identifying (it also reminds us that those elected in 2009, seven years ago, did not include a single woman). The issue of gender in leadership is extremely complicated and deals with the confluence of myriad factors, from gender stereotypes and unwelcoming spaces to public perceptions and internal histories. Prior to this year, the largest discussion concerning gender in leadership was in response to the aforementioned university-wide study. This conversation was not prominent, however, because the study looks at leadership in all Princeton student organizations, and in fact suggests that in the realm of highest leadership roles women are more likely to be represented on ‘the street’ than on campus. Furthermore, some of the open or sign-in clubs do in fact have a fairly consistent legacy of women leaders. I was specifically pointed to Colonial by one alumna as an example of a club with many women presidents over the years. In the past year to two years, however, the conversation has both shifted and come to the forefront due to increasing national conversations

⁷⁰ Princeton prospect foundation: Welcome. In Princeton Prospect Foundation [database online]. [Cited January 20 2015]. Available from princetonprospectfoundation.org.

about sexual assault, sexism, and the eating club system itself. As TI has been in the spotlight many times due to these issues (see section 2), the intensity of strategizing to achieve more equitable gender representation has increased among all clubs. This is true both in informal conversations that I observed as these scandals broke as well as more formally in structures and representation. In terms of leadership, one new officer told me about her elections, “people were consciously thinking... we want to elect females, as opposed to not thinking about it at all and not doing it.”⁷¹ She then continued on to explain the importance and benefit of this new attention to gender: “it’s just so ingrained, in especially a lot of the higher leadership roles like president and vice president, to think of that person as a male.”⁷² This sentiment of being consciously considered for a role as a potential woman leader does seem to be fairly new, and emerging in response to these recent events. In fact, as one grad board member discussed the female presidents and leaders over the years, she too reveals the novelty of this sentiment: “[they were] all incredibly dynamic, great women. There certainly wasn’t any idea that they were elected president because there was any need anybody had to elect a woman; you know this year everybody’s like ‘oh, maybe we should elect a woman,’ right? But... they weren’t ever elected because there was any feeling anybody needed to...”⁷³ What is fascinating about this relative change in thinking about gender in leadership is that these presidents she refers to are as recent as 2004. It has really been only during the past decade that there has been a substantial drop in women officers (as well as leaders across campus, and according to the report, campuses across America). This concern by women leaders that women are now in leadership to fill a quota is something I have observed increasing in regular conversation since TI had to ask their current

⁷¹ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Interview with Princeton alumna W7, March 6, 2015.

top leadership to step down as the result of a sexual harassment case that involved the distribution of a pornographic photo, and their graduate board instituted new rules about women in leadership, including stressing the need for the new president to be a woman.⁷⁴ This has raised speculation about whether she would have been chosen otherwise, as well as if she is free to perform the role in the manner she wishes or if she is receiving mandates from other male officers and the grad board.⁷⁵ Also interesting to note is that these issues are not limited to the presidential roles, but actually are felt throughout all the main officer positions. An outgoing bicker chair disclosed to me that he feels deeply held stereotypes affect the perception of who is a good fit for the role, ultimately leading to a historical gender disparity for the position:

This is a position that always goes to a guy... things that are involved with it are people who are outgoing, public speaking, crowd control: things that are considered typically admirable qualities in men and pushy qualities in women... demanding the respect of the entire room while leading discussions, being simultaneously kind of approachable but also like an authority figure that maintains the rules... I think that that conforms with the societal expectations of what guys should do and girls shouldn't do, to a degree.⁷⁶

It is true that bicker chairs are typically male, and a potential counterpart to this trend is that in many clubs social chairs are generally female. Some clubs are so overwhelmingly male in leadership that this is not the case (because no officers are women), but otherwise this can develop as a trend. This follows parallel biases: the social chair is essentially the event planner, responsible for organizing all of the occasions described in the previous section, getting and setting up decorations, sending out invitations, etc. The prescribed role as a “party planner” predictably can end up cast as feminine.

⁷⁴ Parts, Spencer. 2015. At Princeton, women make strides at clubs that once barred them. *The New York Times*, February 20, 2015, sec N.Y./Region.

⁷⁵ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

⁷⁶ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

What is it that has made these stereotypes so salient in the student body and club memberships as to actually affect the leadership in the past decade? While I as a researcher am somewhat limited to broader knowledge about American gender politics, especially in terms of popular perception, from the early 2000s, I indeed have a partial potential answer to this question. I argue that one of the primary reasons that biased conceptions of leadership roles emerge is the extremely short collective memory and limited social self-consciousness inherent in a two-year membership. When students join a club as sophomores with a female social chair, see the classes above them vote in another female social chair, and then as juniors elect another female social chair (potentially because she is best for the job or runs unopposed), it is going to be difficult to change this pattern during their senior year elections (largely because it is a subconscious expectation). This is especially true when the status quo fits into internalized expectations of gendered tasks, personalities, and social performances. So, by the time seniors are participating in their final elections, they have seen at most three prior officers in any given role. Even if they were the first three officers of their gender to have that role, it has real, powerful potential to become the status quo, and therefore expectation, in just two years. I believe that short collective memory, in conjunction with socialized stereotypes, plays a large role in maintaining male leaders, even after a period with comparatively high instances of female leadership (as was the case from around 2000 to around 2005). I do not believe this is the only factor, and indeed would need psychological evidence to prove its significance, but I do believe that literature on internalization and group behavior is in agreement enough for this suggestion to be of merit.

One of the most interesting aspects of eating club leadership to me is the spatial aspect of living in the house and the social dynamics and privileges that it brings. Obviously, being an officer in a club comes with a set of rights and connections that regular members do not have, and those freedoms extend to officers' close friends in many cases. If you show up to a club that you are not on the list for or do not have a pass for, all you have to do to gain access is to say the name of the officer who said you were allowed to be there, and once that person is found/checked with, you can get in. Furthermore, if you are anywhere in the club and accompanying an officer of that club, you are allowed to be there. During the day this is slightly less remarkable, as you can in the majority of clubs accompany a regular member into the houses. However, on nights out, more formal events, and late nights in general, these privileges are significant. The spatial privilege of officership is something with which I am well acquainted, given that my boyfriend was elected as an officer in Cap over a year ago, in February 2014, and during all of my visits within the duration of this project he was living in the house. This has given me a lot of experience within the house and especially within the officer-only spaces, times, and events inside. The eating clubs have anywhere from 3 to 13+ officers living in them, which is almost completely dependent on the layout of the house/how large the floor with the officers' quarters is. This floor is the upper floor of the houses, which is both important in a practical sense and in terms of the social dynamic it defines. While it makes sense that the officers' living spaces would allow them the privacy enjoyed by other students in their rooms, it also creates a spatially defined level of exclusivity that only the officers and their very close personal guests are included in. This is especially true in Cap, because they are the one of the very few clubs with a living room/common space specifically for the residents, and theirs includes a sort of private bar as part of the officers' quarters (the bar was incidental and was

relocated there when the new taproom was added to the main club). Because this space is so large, it is a social hub amongst the officers and their friends, with enough room for TV, game consoles, a card table for homework, and the bar area. Different officer corps have varying rules about whether members are allowed to join them in this common space or not, but either way involvement there requires invitation and connection, exclusive to a small group of people. As one guest described, “it feels like a VIP area of the club. You have to know someone to go there, and I feel like you only go there if you know you belong there. [at night or for events] it’s effectively a private party. You have your own bar, music, group of people, etc.”⁷⁷ This comment resonates strongly with my personal experience, as I have spent a lot of time utilizing the exclusive space before, during, and after various events over the past year. In the officers’ common room, you can throw a private pregame for Lawnparties that allows you to save time getting ready, choose the small group of people you want to include, and to watch the day’s proceedings from an upstairs windowsill. If you are at the club on a night that it is on tap, but you do not want to drink the cheap beer they serve or be stuck in the large crowds dancing and partying, you can go upstairs to the private space and make your own drink with a handful of other students who ‘belong’ there. If the eating clubs conceptualize themselves as “private club,”⁷⁸ then the officer common room is the ‘private room’ or ‘VIP section.’ This feeling of exclusivity can be thrilling in particular ways, especially when there are events occurring on the first and basement floor; one feels acutely that the crowds on those floors do not have access to the top floor of the house, and so this access becomes a measure of relative social importance by way of interpersonal connections to those in power. The officers have this sense of being chosen to be on top of the social pyramid both from conceptual and perceived hierarchies, but also from

⁷⁷ Interview with senior M5, November 1, 2014.

⁷⁸ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

very real privileges. Depending on the club and their individual policies, as an officer your guest tickets to formal events could be free (these can be worth \$50-\$100 in some cases), you have access to the uncooked food (so bread, cheese, veggies, cereal, drink machines) at any time of the day or night, you can potentially bring people to meals without having to pay for them (because you control the guest meal tabs), and more. I mention all of this to illustrate the reasons that a leadership position could be competitive, and to give a more full description of the benefits chosen officers have over the general membership. I believe that the officers living in the house have a significant effect on the cultural atmosphere of the day-to-day events of their club, so the idea that a woman would have her space shaped and defined by the whims of six men instead of three men and three women could potentially have an impact on her experience. Representation in leadership will ultimately make a felt difference for women in these clubs, even if it is difficult to conceptualize how at this early, gender-biased stage.

Part 5: Alternatives

Princeton sophomores and juniors who do not wish to join any of the eleven eating clubs for their meals have a few other options for food. Again, this consists of around 30% of upperclassmen at the university,⁷⁹ so none of the various options are largely populated. The first option for students is to remain eating all of their meals at the dining halls by purchasing a standard meal plan as they would have had their freshman and sophomore years in their residential colleges. The second option for students is to go completely independent, meaning they do not buy their meals through any Princeton University institution but rather buy groceries and cook meals for themselves. Students who choose to do this can live in specific housing on campus that is more apartment-style, so that they will have access to full kitchens in which to cook. A handful of the students with whom I am acquainted chose one of these first two paths, and in many ways the survey responses from the non-members that I received reflect the sentiments and experiences I have observed from keeping in touch with them. The number one reason that students choose not to join eating clubs is attributed to the extra financial burden, so choosing to cook for oneself certainly makes sense. Eating club dues are quite pricey, despite the fact that the university will provide additional financial aid to students who choose to join clubs, and remaining in the campus dining halls is a cheaper option, especially in the specific case of the free meal plan offered to RCAs (Resident Advisors). However, another reason I have seen among students who choose not to join or to leave eating clubs can be seen in their commitment to other pursuits. Some people are so fully involved in specific projects or extremely intensive

⁷⁹ A Princeton profile: Campus life. September 9, 2014 [cited March 16, 2015]. Available from <http://www.princeton.edu/pub/profile/campus-life/>.

majors or research that prevent them from being able to participate in the day to day activities and benefits of the clubs.

The third option, and the one most discussed as a viable ‘alternative’ or “counterpart”⁸⁰ to the eating clubs is joining a co-op, or food cooperatives. There are three main co-ops: 2-D (2 Dickinson Street), which is vegetarian, founded in 1977; Brown, founded in 1994; and IFC (International Food Co-op) which celebrates global cuisine, founded in 2009. When a student joins a co-op, they pay a fee for the semester (anywhere from \$550-\$800), and then are expected to help cook dinners based on schedules that each membership determines in return for eating meals there. Brown and IFC have on-campus spaces where there are kitchens and dining areas specifically designated for members of the co-ops, and 2D has a house, where some of the members actually live (pictured in appendix 4). It is this spatial aspect of the co-ops that makes them the most viable alternative to the all-inclusive membership in an eating club, as the membership is similarly felt through shared activities and exclusive locations for members to gather for the purposes of meals, studying, and socializing. 2-D in particular plays this role, given not only its space as a house, but also its history of being founded in direct opposition to eating clubs – to offer an alternative. During my visit to Princeton for this project through November 7th-10th, 2014, I was invited by a member to attend 2-D on his weeknight to cook. The social actions of cooking and eating together are widely acknowledged to be builders of psychological bonds amongst social groups, and these are developed both in eating clubs and co-ops alike. However, the time and effort put into actually cooking the meals with peers in co-ops builds strong relationships, a dynamic that was evident even from my role as a guest. Indeed, one interviewee relayed to me a friends’ experience in one of the co-ops: “She loves it, and totally

⁸⁰ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

sees it as... social life *and* food, and I know that co-ops they cook together - that's also a huge social bonding thing that you definitely wouldn't get out of being in an eating club."⁸¹ As a personal anecdote along the same lines, while I was helping make enough mashed sweet potatoes for 40 people, one of the members baked a sweet bread for a snack. She baked two or three loaves, leaving them up on the counter where free-for-all food goes. People walking in and out of the kitchen all night remarked upon its deliciousness, starting conversations with us working in the kitchen and her as the baker, introducing themselves to me as a guest, and checking in with the chefs about what was being made for dinner and if they needed any help. Something like this would never happen in an eating club, because their cooking is done by hired chefs, closing off the food chain at consumption for the students. On the other hand, members of co-ops must navigate the financial side of feeding a large group of people, as well as the difficulties of particular tastes, desires, and allergies. So, while eating clubs certainly offer students more physical space for socialization and studying, co-ops offer a potentially more meaningful food experience depending on preference and create more of a sense of a large family, rather than a larger community. So why are all of these alternative options so unpopular amongst Princeton upperclassmen?

The answer to that question is obvious on the surface, but needs to be deconstructed to really understand students' motivations. The simple answer is that Eating Clubs offer access to all of the events, nightlife, parties, social interactions, and more that I have discussed throughout this project. But it is important to problematize this assumption by pointing out that no other school of which I am aware has eating clubs, and undergraduate students still access the same

⁸¹ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

experiences. As this paper does not have much space for a deep discussion of the myriad factors contributing to the ubiquity of eating clubs as social life, and the subsequent failure of alternatives to make a dent in it, I will try to concisely address the most prominent in order to combine this discussion with the experiences and opinions of the study participants.

From my perspective as an undergraduate from a different school, the primary reason nothing comes close to the involvement of eating clubs is the town of Princeton itself. There are no bars, clubs, even restaurants that are open late, within walking distance, offering affordable drinks. There are no students living in off-campus apartments or houses to hold parties. There are essentially no other options for late – night activities even on campus, as one of my interviewees explained: “Princeton’s a wasteland. There’s really not a lot to do... It just doesn’t feel like there’s much else to do [besides going to the street]...”⁸² She mentions that their student government hosts movies on the weekends, but otherwise even campus itself is generally devoid of free events. This, in combination with the utter lack of off-campus activities available to undergraduate students, essentially dictates that everyone who is planning to go out at night will end up in taprooms on the street. This emptiness in terms of activities is interesting historically in that it is tied to the changes in legal drinking age legislation over time, specifically when, in 1982, New Jersey raised the age from 19 to 21.⁸³ Before this, in the 70s (when the drinking age was 18), Princeton actually housed a pub on campus, as described to me by an alumna from the class of 1974: “everybody would go there... you could go there when you were a freshman... They only served beer, they had food, and there were grownups: there was a guy on duty every night.”⁸⁴ So in this era, students of all ages and affiliations could gather here as an alternative for

⁸² Interview with Princeton alumna W1, November 14, 2014.

⁸³ Sullivan, Joseph F. 1982. Jersey's legislature votes to raise legal drinking age from 19 to 21. *The New York Times*, December 14, 1982, sec N.Y./Region.

⁸⁴ Interview with Princeton alumna W7, March 6, 2014.

those who did not want to be in a club, or were not allowed to be in one. Once the drinking age was raised to 21, however, the school could not (or did not) sustain the pub, and the social life in clubs expanded over time to include the underclassmen and grew to their current prominence. Furthermore, regardless of options, there is an issue of “people thinking everything exclusive has to be better...”⁸⁵ which is not only reflected in the difference in attitude that some groups have toward bicker versus sign-in clubs, but also in how many people join the more exclusive eating clubs than participate in alternative food options. As one student put it, “things might definitely be better... if people didn’t have the perception... or if maybe the co-ops were a bigger part of the sort of social experience... [maybe] if they were visible and people saw them, they would feel more like a viable alternative.”⁸⁶ And because the organizations are so small, it is even more unlikely that direct social relationships would steer someone in to a co-op in the same way that friends influence friends to join particular clubs. Furthermore, the co-ops are only communal for the dinner meals; members simply have access to food to make themselves breakfast and lunch – and even dinners occur at a set time rather than a time range. This is significant because for example, if a co-op scheduled dinner at 6:30pm and I had a class that ran from 6-7pm, I would likely not choose to join it, or if I did, I would miss out on all of the comparable social benefits. It is also possible for members of co-ops to almost never interact if they are not assigned the same nights to help cook. From this perspective, the alternative food options are hardly alternative to the experience of an eating club.

Ultimately, though alternatives exist, and in fact could provide a rich social experience in some cases, I have felt a fairly intense dichotomy emerge over junior and senior years between

⁸⁵ Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

the students who choose to join clubs and those who do not, which was reflected in the non-member data collected in the survey I conducted (Appendix 1). Non-members have vocally criticized the club system for everything from being “too conformist”⁸⁷ to the bicker process being unfairly discriminatory. But as has been proven throughout the history of eating clubs, as a system they are an immovable monolith. In fact, as I discovered in observing the conversations of club members, the alternative eating choices such as going independent or co-ops are a complete non-issue to them. I never once heard a conversation that included any of the other options, despite hearing innumerable conversations about various scandals, articles, and issues with the eating clubs themselves. This is remarkable, as these options are certainly less exclusionary and more welcoming to diverse genders, races, and other people groups. Alternative dining options are essentially invisible on campus to those who are not interested in pursuing them, which is hotly debated as being for better or worse for the undergraduate population. But as will become clear in the conclusion of this project, those involved in the eating club system do not feel motivated to alter the overall system, and consciously prefer it to alternatives, whether real or hypothetical.

⁸⁷ Survey Interview, Anonymous Response to question 20. Full question and response in Appendix 1.

Discussion

The overwhelming theme that emerged in my discussion of gender with my subjects was the idea of whether or not particular places could be described as ‘safe spaces.’ The vast majority of members would describe their clubs as being secure environments in which they are comfortable. This is also one of the major reasons Princeton students feel that the eating club system is preferable in terms of college social life – that because of their strict policies, high stakes in liability, and coordination with university resources, drinking and interpersonal relations are actually institutionally cautious. Once again, I feel that I have a uniquely appropriate perspective to respond to these claims, having spent much meaningful time both within and outside of this small sphere of experience. In terms of the overwhelmingly common comparison with greek life (see conclusion), I have to agree that they are vastly less treacherous. As a first-year woman at a state school with active greek life, my friends and I were always cautious to only go to fraternity parties where we knew one of the brothers, and if we ended up somewhere else to only drink beer out of cans. Not only were these safety precautions unfairly put on our shoulders as young women, they were ineffective in keeping us safe all the time, and we attended a party in which much of the alcohol had been drugged. Drinking in eating clubs absolutely *never* runs this risk, firstly because they only serve beer through a tap/keg system, but secondly and more prominently because of the huge liability issues the institutions must avoid. Because of their close ties to the university, clubs are required to take huge strides to monitor the safety of students. But this leads exactly to what stands out to me as the flaw in the comparison: the great level of coordination between the clubs and the university. This is not something that you could claim about greek life, in that the university police and health resources are not closely coordinated with both individual and systemic leadership in the way that they have come to be in

eating clubs over the past two decades. Indeed, the involvement of health resources in the everyday activities of the club, from posting sexual health information in bathrooms to having quick and non-detrimental emergency response services, contribute to the comparative level of safety.

What intrigues me as an older undergraduate student is that eating clubs are never compared from the inside to the regular social life of American adults that involves going to bars and clubs. This is what students who wish to socialize with alcohol do when they are of legal age, and would be my first thought as a comparison of what ‘going out’ on the weekend means to university students. In this sense, eating clubs’ open nights are quite similar in associated risks and experiences in terms of both gender and alcohol consumption. As a woman, my gender affects my reality far more than a man would in a bar setting, in that I am constantly thinking about potentially harmful or uncomfortable social encounters with strangers. This is due to the imbalance in sexual perception and the way that males feel entitled to ownership of and aggression toward females in American society. The idea that someone I am not interested in might come up and ‘hit on’ me or try to dance with me is the dynamic that Princeton’s young women respondents described to me as the primary way they feel their gender identities affect their experience in eating clubs. In that sense, their most gendered experience is just a regular night for most undergraduate women. Essentially, female members who spend a lot of day to day time in their clubs both notice their gender less in terms of the way they are both treated and expected to act. They are also negatively affected by patriarchal biases less frequently than the average female undergraduate student who does not have such a ‘safe place’ as these communities.

Gender, indeed, has enthralled me throughout the conception and execution of this project. Originally, I embarked on this research because gender in terms of leadership and sexuality was being talked about frequently by my friends at Princeton, and much of this conversation was sparked by more public discussion of recent events that had been reported by media in somewhat sensational exposes (in many cases, rightly so). But what I found surprised me. Over the course of the past year, the widespread attention spurred meaningful, formal changes in rules of gender representation in leadership. These relatively recent regulations include everything from Cannon's requirement of both a male and female social chair, some clubs requiring the President and Vice Presidents to be different genders, and TI essentially requiring that their newest President be a woman (though I believe that claim could be counted as hearsay, I did hear it several times). Whether the motivations for these procedures were genuine or in response to powerful criticism is important, but in some ways is beside the point. It is encouraging to see actual changes on the street in reaction to the women's leadership report and the public and internal criticisms born of a few outrages. Gendered dynamics continued to surprise me throughout the investigation of this project insofar as I never expected that the felt effects of various gender identities would be so localized into leadership and nights out. Of course, there are certainly gendered expectations associated with both bicker and formal events, but a significant number of those concern appearance and are therefore a part of identifying as a particular gender in America, not having that identity at Princeton specifically (though the counterargument would be that eating clubs, by having these events, reinforce these harmful binary expectations). One reason I may not have expected this experience is that my gender is inherently a primary defining characteristic of my identity in social groups at Princeton, because when I meet new people I play the role of "state-school girlfriend from back home" (a trope

which could be its own research study in the sociological self-definition of the Ivy League).

While I certainly noticed being treated very well during my visits to eating clubs, I did not spend enough time there to discern whether or not that was simply due to good luck that everyone I interacted with was particularly nice and relatively unbiased towards my gender, appearance, and role. As the respondents from this project have indicated, in large part this sense of being welcomed is due to the atmosphere once accepted as a member into a club. For most clubs, once you're in, everyone (and the guests they choose to bring) is treated essentially the same. This is something that is certainly true of drinking rituals, eating arrangements, and use of space within the club.

The use of space, however, is incredibly rich to study in its own right. I have mentioned the structural nuances and social implications in various places throughout the project, hopefully forming a clear picture of the cultural implications of the spatial institutions, to borrow Spain's term. The actual structure of the houses and the way in which the physical spaces act as very real and formal social controls was one of the first things that fascinated me about the clubs. A regular attendee of a party at a club would be allowed to enter on the ground floor and go into the basement. Members have access to what is generally the second floor of the houses, and sometimes during parties will bring non-members there, but frequently use that portion of the house as an alternative to going down to the party. Furthermore, no one under any circumstances would go up into the officer quarters without being escorted or invited by one. This delineation of access based on qualifying social positions is in some sense created by, and certainly dictated by, the actual layout of the house itself. It is also interesting to note the ways that the history and elitism of the institutions are woven into the space through the design and furnishings. From lavish furniture to technically unnecessary entertainment facilities (theater TV rooms, game

systems, billiards tables, etc.) there is no shortage of displays of wealth in these mansions. There is similarly a proliferation of dark wood, leather, velvet, books, pianos, and other classical indicators of ‘fancy people’s’ spaces. These displays of elegance, sometimes bordering on extravagance, are important as they are constant physical reminders of the exclusivity so fundamental to the origins of these institutions – a subconscious implication of superiority, no matter how accessible the clubs are and become to current and future undergraduate students.

Even more tangibly reinforcing this point to members and visitors alike is the vast amount of wall space dedicated to composites⁸⁸ and old membership photos. It is not out of the ordinary for social clubs and organizations to put a notable amount of effort into memorializing their founders. However, in terms of the discussions involved in this project, the prominence of the displays of the first decades of founding members in many of the clubs deserves attention. As can be seen in the photos in Appendix 2, there is a very large display of the photos of original members in one of the recreational rooms (these photos are in Cap, but this phenomenon is not unique to them). The entire wall is essentially covered in wealthy white men who are indeed the origin and founders of the club, yet somehow simultaneously disconcert the keen and critical viewer. Again, people generally pay no purposeful notice to these photos, but it is impossible to claim they have no effect on the self-conception of membership throughout the years that they have been overlooking the day to day activity of the students. It stands out to me that this is still done in an era of purposeful attempts to make the clubs more friendly spaces for students of all backgrounds and a general desire to have all students be members on the street rather than just the wealthiest ones. The primary reason they maintain their status in the house is likely that none of the members ever actually deliberately see or pay attention to them. However, as an outsider

⁸⁸ Face boards including a picture and name of each member of the club. One is made each year.

coming in to the clubs, this is something that stood out to me as a way of visually presenting their cultural history and entrenching my participation in it.

Overall, I believe the utilization of space and demarcation of proper access and activity in different areas of the houses can be read as symbols reflecting the cultural hierarchies and institutional social rules within the eating club system. This is especially true at times when non-members are involved in activities as well as in terms of different privileges between the non-members, the members, and the officer corps. The social controls and expectations defined by the geography of Prospect Ave. are key elements in understanding the ritualized behavior and cultural knowledge of Princeton undergraduates in their relationship to eating clubs.

As has hopefully become clear thus far, eating clubs have a culture all their own. Students use specific language, full of both jargon and slang, when talking about clubs, events, etc. The system involves specific rituals which I have attempted to describe and explain, from drinking games to initiations, from gatekeeping procedures to wardrobe expectations. A remarkable facet of this culture is the social controls, both formal and informal. The formal controls include the hiring of bouncers to monitor inside activities and restrict participation to the selected group as well as the institutionalized process of membership and participation. The informal peer-enforced social controls include the various expectations described throughout of dress, action, participation in particular rituals, and conforming to the expectations of group identity and community limits. Certainly, Turner's framework of rites of passage can be seen in the liminality of the collective experience of bicker, the shared stress, the pressure to perform in particular ways in order to be successful, and its remarkable power to transform students from limited underclassmen to exclusive members. Becoming a member in a club will likely have a lifelong effect on Princeton students and alumni, as my survey results confirm in that thirteen

members said their membership is “a large part” of their identity on campus, and no one responded that it was “not at all” a part of their identity.⁸⁹ The group connections and individual gains through the process of selection and initiation into full membership can remain a defining characteristic of any student’s entire life – one alumna told me a story of an ‘old-timer’ from the early 60s who spoke briefly at an anniversary event recently, illustrating that the alumni network can be for life if students are interested in investing that much into the organization. Many people are indeed interested and do maintain a close connection with their clubs, as can be seen through the institutions’ massive endowments, expensive renovations and additions, and rowdy crowds during Princeton’s annual reunions. In so many ways, eating clubs create a complete subculture within the American university system. The complexity of this culture is unparalleled in any other university subsystem that I am aware of due to its physicality and overwhelming power. The intricacies are rich with both unique aspects and reflections of larger American society in a combination that begs attention and discussion.

⁸⁹ Question number 12 in survey, Appendix 1.

Conclusion

Throughout this project, the overarching question has been, in a sense, why eating clubs? This system is a phenomenon unique to Princeton University and has been condemned in the public eye for various reasons. It can be and has been described as exclusionary and elitist, and has certainly had its fair share of scandals and a wide range of critics. So why has the institution persisted in such a powerful way for a century and a half? According to the responses I received and conversations I had over the course of my ethnographic inquiry, it is because despite its flaws, Princeton students and alumni believe it to be the best social system a university could have.

As many respondents pointed out, most schools only have greek life as a semi-comparable institutionalized social life, which is far more harmful in terms of gender identities and bodily experiences – especially during open social events. This conception is not a particular argument of mine, but in fact is a counterpart that eating club members find extremely important as an element of their self-definition and preference for their own system. In this closing section, I will illustrate this by including large sections of interviews, as their voices in these vignettes make this point much more strongly than mine.

“I would say that I think the eating club system is probably preferable to a lot of what my friends have experienced at other schools... There’s no danger of people drunk driving or anything like that... I think that you know, Princeton’s like a relatively safe area, and that’s not to say that things can’t happen, and they do, but it’s nice that everybody is sort of in the same place. It’s pretty rare that somebody would leave campus for real, and you wouldn’t know where they went... it’s really nice to know that anybody that you want to hang out with that’s going out

is going to be in like one of ten houses on the same street, or they're going to be on one of the dorms on campus... It makes socializing easier for people who are interested in socializing in that environment.”⁹⁰

“To me what's strange is sororities and fraternities. Why on earth in a co-ed environment do we have separate sex fraternal organizations still existing? I mean, why is that happening? And in the same way that back forty years ago, I wouldn't go in to TI, or I wouldn't go in to Cannon club, I don't know that I would want to go in to a frat house – because it's that same idea: If you're not a member, you're not in the club [and you don't get treated that way].”⁹¹

“One thing that I would say that I really do like about the eating clubs is that because of the clubs, fraternities and sororities are much less of a big thing on campus... So I think it's good in that it sort of minimizes that culture a lot. Because I think the eating clubs, because they're in these big houses, and because they're run by a graduate board, and because they have these other sort of rules, they all have to make their environment relatively safe... I think on the whole, safety is a much bigger concern, just because of – I don't know, maybe it's just the history, or the stakes that they're playing with as opposed to like a frat... and I do think that eating clubs are exclusive, but there are no like gender splits, they're all co-ed, and I also think it's good that they're bigger because.... Like [in] a frat current membership has a really big say in [future membership because of the small size]. Whereas [here]... the members do choose who gets in or not, but it's not like you're going to know the hundred people you're letting in. So a lot of it is

⁹⁰ Interview with Princeton alumna W1, November 14, 2015.

⁹¹ Interview with Princeton alumna W7, March 6, 2015.

just people who you randomly meet during bicker... so it's less social connections, you can get into any club just sort of being yourself.”⁹²

“Between being an RCA and an eating club officer... I've met all of the players in the administration who decide policy and stuff... This is exactly what I've heard [the chief medical university liaison from campus health] say twice: ‘When I first came to Princeton, I thought eating clubs were the problem, because we kept getting these people who would come into McCosh who are hammered out of their minds, and say, ‘I’ve been at the ____ club.’ It only took me about five years to realize that the eating clubs were not the problem, and that every single person who came in to me, in to here with a BAC of .4 had been drinking hard alcohol in their rooms before they went to these eating clubs, and that was the problem.... I actually think the eating clubs make drinking safer on campus. They serve light beer that’s not high in alcohol content, they have bouncers, they can kick people out and send people home and bring people to McCosh who are too drunk.’ ... The director of SHARE⁹³... has said like, we decided that instead of hating eating clubs, we would do our job more effectively if we tried to work with the eating clubs and train their officers... in bystander intervention, if we put our SHARE peers in the clubs, [etc.].”⁹⁴

Outsiders are also convinced of these claims and identify these counterpoints once experiencing eating clubs in a meaningful way. When given only the prompt to speak on what he

⁹² Interview with Princeton junior W4, February 19, 2015.

⁹³ Sexual Harassment/Assault Advising, Resources and Education

⁹⁴ Interview with Princeton senior M2, November 8, 2014.

thought about eating clubs as social systems, one visitor responded, “I think it’s better than Greek life. Because it’s gender inclusive. And more diverse in personality.”⁹⁵

Even within the school itself, the major critics are answered with the same arguments, as one commenter on a ‘hose bicker’ cartoon (see appendix 6) wrote:

I think there's valid criticism/discussion to be had about eating clubs, but if you're comparing us with other schools - the alternative isn't some utopia where everyone is friends and meals and parties magically happen. Students organize themselves in social groups; parties require money, effort, and liability. The practical alternative, at most schools, is a highly toxic male-dominated Greek system. Again, I think we should be critical of the clubs and figure out how to make things better - but don't think that this is somehow a uniquely terrible thing.⁹⁶

These quotes all reflect major themes and widespread feelings found in students’ (particularly alumni, members and members-to-be) attitudes toward the eating club system. Though the history woven into the buildings and traditions may have been exclusionary and accessible to only the elite, the institutional transformations over time have given many students a street full of mansions that feel like second homes. While no one would claim that gender equity has been achieved in terms of leadership, safety, or comfort, the majority of the clubs are currently making conscious strides to be welcoming to all gender identities. These steps include things like rewording invitations, publications, and emails to include more than two genders, ensuring event themes are socially welcoming, and reworking the questions and activities in the bicker and initiation processes. Unfortunately, from what I have seen, these efforts do not frequently extend to other cultural identities such as race and sexual orientation.

⁹⁵ GW senior M4 in communication with author, March 16, 2015.

⁹⁶ Anonymous comment, self-identified as “alum” on cartoon: Moore, Jack. 2015. Club deflation. The Daily Princetonian. Posted March 4, 2015.

Though the clubs (and by proxy, the university) may condone activities that are cause for concern, they are certainly not the only locations that young adults drink alcohol and engage in questionable activity. On the contrary, as the quotes above illustrate, many would suggest that they provide a much safer outlet to do so through social monitoring, health resources, and centralization of activities. It is curious that this would be the case, given that the preoccupation with safety and safe spaces reveals both contradictions and a construction of ‘other’ that somewhat undermines the claims of the clubs’ superiority. Some clubs have both documented and alleged incidents of sexual harassment and assault. A few have such long histories of being unwelcoming toward women that alumni and female students remarked to me that they would not want to go in those clubs today – one of which features the aforementioned disconcerting use of space to indicate and reinforce uneven power relations between upperclassmen men and underclassmen women. In everyday conversation, these incidents solidify other clubs’ uniform identities by giving them an ‘other’ to distance themselves from and define themselves against. Yet as the quotes above show, these breaches of safety curiously do not penetrate members’ views of the club system as a whole. This is indicative of an even larger self-other dichotomy between Princeton University and the outside world. The fact that students are willing to overlook actual violations by and within clubs in defense of the eating club system implies their conception of the space outside the streets of Princeton must be primarily that of an unavoidable danger of some sort. I urge members of the Princeton community to critically engage with their own contradictory rhetoric in this case. As strides have been made throughout the history of the clubs to make them safer and more inclusive, more can be made upon reflection that there are still goals to be reached in this vein.

Despite the perceived or real relative benefits of this system in comparison to others, it remains true that eating clubs have issues to address moving forward. Leadership is not yet representative of membership, and in many ways female-identifying students have a long battle against the patriarchy before they will feel completely safe and equal in the clubs. The issues of sexual assault and women's leadership roles in particular are becoming nationwide ones, and the strides taken on Prospect Ave. to address these problems will continue to be fascinating as either indicators or counterpoints to the way American society will grapple with them. The issue of bicker is one with a rollercoaster history, and from what I have observed on campus, in conversation, and in response to this project, it will continue as such into the future. In the meantime, I hope to see projects such as this one spark meaningful conversation about students' experiences, good and bad, in the clubs, particularly because they are such a momentous and defining social identity in many of their lives. Eventually, I expect to see that the work being done to open the clubs to a more diverse array of people in a way that feels safe and welcoming will achieve its goal, and the vast majority of experiences had by students of all ages will be positive ones. But right now these conversations are at a crucial tipping point, so moving forward I can only hope to give a voice to students whose concerns may have been overlooked, subconscious, or actively silenced. While women members are being heard and focused on, students of various other social categories (particularly diverse races and LGBTQ students) remain so invisible or so outside of this culture that my research was not able to shed light on their experiences and concerns. Progress has been slow thus far according to one alumna who said, "if someone had asked me to look forward, with my experience and what I saw [40 years ago], I just would never imagine we'd be having these conversations now."⁹⁷ But hopefully

⁹⁷ Interview with alumna W7, March 6, 2015.

concerted effort in combination with larger societal changes will make these conversations only historical ones.

The eating club system is a vastly intricate and circumscribed culture, complete with geographical elements, gendered elements, psychosocial elements, and layers of exclusivity and privilege. The majority of Princeton undergraduates spend half of their college career in this sphere, and their club association defines a part of their identity for the rest of their lives. Yet, these mansions remain a complete mystery to most of America. I believe that we can learn from their successes and failures, and should take a closer look to uncover their secrets, experiences, conflicts, and joys.

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Appendix 1

Interview Question Guide

Corinne Goudreault

IRB Number: 14-2236



This document contains the proposed guide for my in-person and telephone interviews. These interviews will follow this same template.

1. Demographic Questions
 - a. Age
 - b. Year in school (if applicable)
 - c. Gender Identity (as well as gender identity during university, if different)
 - d. Eating Club Status: Member/Alum, Non-member, not yet eligible?
 - e. If member, is the club a bicker club or a sign-in club?
 - f. If member, is the subject in leadership?
2. Ethnographic Questions
 - a. Tell me about eating clubs in general – your perceptions, how you would describe them to someone who has never heard of them?
 - b. Tell me about your personal experiences with eating clubs?
 - i. If no substantial response, re-prompt with a request for any specific memories of events they've attended
 - ii. (There will likely be a few questions from interviewer in response to these stories or answers that are unpredictable at this time)
3. Bounded Spaces/Gender
 - a. In what ways do you feel your gender identity has affected your experience at Princeton?
 - b. In what ways do you feel your gender identity has affected your experience in eating clubs, if any?
 - c. Do you believe eating clubs create spaces of exclusion?
 - i. If so, are there any ways that you have felt eating clubs could be altered to be more inclusive to a wider population?
4. Various Undergraduate Experiences (these questions to be asked only if not addressed in earlier discussion)
 - a. Has drug use or alcohol consumption been a part of/affected your undergraduate experiences at Princeton?
 - i. If so, do you associate this more or less with eating clubs than other situations?
 - ii. If more, in what ways do you feel this to be true?
 - b. (only for very comfortable interviewees that have shown no sign of discomfort with previous sensitive topics) How do you find sexuality manifesting itself in Princeton social life? Do eating club events affect the ways that students interact sexually? (i.e., 'DFMO,' club 'incest', random hookups, pressure on finding relationships)
5. For leaders:
 - a. Do you feel like there is gender-based prejudice inherent in your role?
 - b. Do you feel eating clubs offer more student leadership opportunities for your gender identity than do other kinds of on-campus organizations?
 - c. What challenges have you faced in planning events for your eating clubs? Especially challenges concerning creating safe spaces for various genders and sexualities?

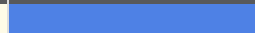



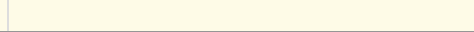
Survey Report

Last Modified: 03/18/2015

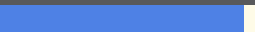



1. Dear participant, My name is Corinne Goudreault and I am a senior Anthropology student at the UNC Chapel Hill. I am conducting a research study, to become a senior honors thesis, on undergraduate students' experiences in Princeton University's eating clubs. The purpose of this study is to generate new knowledge. It will do so by asking questions about students' involvement in eating clubs and their perspectives on these experiences. Information about the study: -The survey, which will ask you questions about eating clubs, should take less than 5 minutes of your time and is voluntary. This is the extent of your participation in this research project. -What will happen if you participate in this study: You will answer the questions in this anonymous survey. These answers will become part of aggregate data used in the final paper. -You may stop taking the survey at any time, and you may skip any question (except two on the first page) for any reason. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty. -You will not receive any direct benefit from being in this research study. -Possible risks from participating in this study: There are almost no risks in participating in this survey portion of this research study. The only possible risk is that you will feel discomfort upon reflecting on negative past experiences. If this occurs, you are free to leave the survey incomplete, or decide to opt out completely at any time. -Protection of your information in this study: Your answers are completely anonymous and will not be traced back to anyone in any way. You are not required to provide any of the identifying demographic information at the end of the survey, or any other information that you feel may be used to identify your identity. I will not have access to any records of which specific persons participated in this survey, so there is no risk of any personal information being revealed in any way. - If you have any questions regarding this survey, you may contact me (the principal investigator of this study) via email at corinneg@live.unc.edu. - All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at (919) 966-3113 or via email at IRB_subjects@unc.edu. By clicking 'I consent' and completing the survey, you agree to be a participant in this study.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	I consent		29	100%
2	I do not consent		0	0%
	Total		29	100%

2. What is your gender identity? (Asked of all respondents)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	male		14	52%
2	female		13	48%
3	androgynous		0	0%
4	gender queer		0	0%
5	self-identify		0	0%
	Total		27	100%
	self-identify			

3. What are your preferred pronouns? (Asked of all respondents)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Male (he, him)		14	52%
2	Female (she, her)		11	41%
3	Neutral (they, them)		2	7%
4	Neutral (ze, zir)		0	0%
	Total		27	100%

4. Eating Club Status: Are you a(n): (Asked of all respondents)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Not yet eligible (first-year or sophomore)		3	11%
2	Non-Member (junior or senior not in a club)		5	19%
3	Member: Bicker Club		15	56%
4	Member: Sign-in Club		2	7%
5	Alumnus: Bicker Club		1	4%
6	Alumnus: Sign-in Club		1	4%
	Total		27	100%





5. Eating clubs have made my university experience better overall. (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		0	0%
2	Disagree		2	11%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		4	21%
4	Agree		4	21%
5	Strongly Agree		9	47%
	Total		19	100%




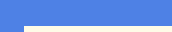

6. I wish that Princeton had a different kind of prominent social life. (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		1	5%
2	Disagree		7	37%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		3	16%
4	Agree		7	37%
5	Strongly Agree		1	5%
	Total		19	100%




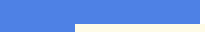

7. It is a good thing that eating clubs and their activities are exclusive. (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		2	11%
2	Disagree		7	37%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		7	37%
4	Agree		3	16%
5	Strongly Agree		0	0%
	Total		19	100%



8. The social space in my eating club reinforces a gender binary. (A male/female dichotomy in self-identification, expressions, actions, dress, etc.). (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		2	11%
2	Disagree		5	26%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		4	21%
4	Agree		7	37%
5	Strongly Agree		1	5%
	Total		19	100%

9. The social space in other eating clubs reinforces a gender binary. (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		1	5%
2	Disagree		2	11%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		5	26%
4	Agree		8	42%
5	Strongly Agree		3	16%
	Total		19	100%

10. My eating club has traditions that are outdated and/or irrelevant to current students. [If you have specific examples, reasons or explanations for your choice, please enter them in the space provided (there is no word limit).] (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		3	17%
2	No		15	83%
	Total		18	100%
Yes		No		
Our initiations process harkens back to a time when members were hazed and "initiated" before becoming full members and do it to others. It involves sexually charged situations and clear hazing.		The only thing that's archaic is initiations, but even the weirder versions of that have been scrapped for practical things. Students at this school rarely have time for time-consuming traditions carried on for the sake of history, if that makes sense.		

11. My eating club encourages members' feedback and/or suggestions for change. [If you have specific examples, reasons or explanations for your choice, please enter them in the space provided (there is no word limit).] (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		14	78%
2	No		4	22%
	Total		18	100%
Yes		No		
We take a lot of pride in being responsive to feedback. Recently, our bicker process was updated to provide a more safe, inclusive experience for potential new members.				
We changed the type of games/questions asked during bicker games for fall bicker in Cap.				
Lots of surveys sent via email				
We elected our leaders.				
Open to member suggestions for things like specific events (themes, party ideas, etc.) and food options.				

12. To what degree is your membership in your eating club a part of your identity on campus at PU? (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Not at all		0	0%
2	Only a little		1	6%
3	Some		3	17%
4	A large part		13	72%
5	Entirely		1	6%
6	I prefer not to answer		0	0%
	Total		18	100%

13. To what degree does (or has) being [insert gender identity] affected your experience in eating clubs in general? (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	None		2	11%
2	Little		0	0%
3	Some		10	56%
4	A Lot		5	28%
5	Completely		1	6%
6	I prefer not to answer		0	0%
	Total		18	100%

14. To what degree does (or has) being [insert gender identity] affected your experience in your own eating club? (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	None		2	11%
2	Little		4	22%
3	Some		10	56%
4	A Lot		2	11%
5	Completely		0	0%
6	I prefer not to answer		0	0%
	Total		18	100%

15. What is your status in your club? (Asked of Members and Alumni only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Member		9	56%
2	Officer		5	31%
3	Alumni		2	13%
4	Other		0	0%
	Total		16	100%
Other				

16. Eating clubs have made my university experience better overall. (Asked of Non-Members only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		2	40%
2	Disagree		1	20%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		1	20%
4	Agree		1	20%
5	Strongly Agree		0	0%
	Total		5	100%

17. I wish that Princeton had a different kind of prominent social life. (Asked of Non-Members only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		0	0%
2	Disagree		0	0%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		0	0%
4	Agree		0	0%
5	Strongly Agree		5	100%
	Total		5	100%









18. It is a good thing that eating clubs and their activities are exclusive. (Asked of Non-Members only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		5	100%
2	Disagree		0	0%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		0	0%
4	Agree		0	0%
5	Strongly Agree		0	0%
	Total		5	100%




19. The social space in eating clubs reinforces a gender binary. (A male/female dichotomy in self-identification, expressions, actions, dress, etc.). (Asked of Non-Members only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		0	0%
2	Disagree		0	0%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		0	0%
4	Agree		2	40%
5	Strongly Agree		3	60%
	Total		5	100%




20. What are the reasons you chose not to join (or to leave) an eating club? [Check all that apply.] (Asked of Non-Members only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Financial		4	80%
2	I did not want to leave my residential college.		1	20%
3	I prefer other social encounters.		4	80%
4	I prefer other kinds of people than the students that join eating clubs.		4	80%
5	I wanted to join a co-op instead.		2	40%
6	I am uncomfortable with their exclusionary policies.		5	100%
7	There is too much emphasis on or participation in alcohol consumption.		0	0%
8	There is too much emphasis on or participation in drug use.		0	0%
9	I feel that being [insert gender identity] would or did negatively affect my experience as a member of an eating club.		2	40%
10	Other:		1	20%
Other:				
too conformist				


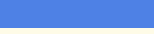

21. Of the reasons you selected, which would you say was the primary or most important reason for your decision not to join (or to leave) an eating club? (Asked of Non-Members only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Financial		2	40%
2	I did not want to leave my residential college.		0	0%
3	I prefer other social encounters.		0	0%
4	I prefer other kinds of people than the students that join eating clubs.		2	40%
5	I wanted to join a co-op instead.		0	0%
6	I am uncomfortable with their exclusionary policies.		0	0%
7	There is too much emphasis on or participation in alcohol consumption.		0	0%
8	There is too much emphasis on or participation in drug use.		0	0%
9	I feel that being [insert gender identity] would or did negatively affect my experience as a member of an eating club.		0	0%
10	Other:		1	20%
	Total		5	100%

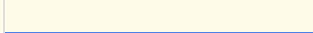




22. Do you plan on bickering a club? (Asked of students not yet eligible for membership only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		2	67%
2	No		0	0%
3	Haven't Decided Yet		1	33%
	Total		3	100%






23. Do you plan on joining a sign-in club? (Asked of students not yet eligible for membership only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		1	33%
2	No		1	33%
3	Haven't Decided Yet		1	33%
	Total		3	100%

24. To what degree has being [insert gender identity] affected your experiences in eating clubs? (Asked of students not yet eligible for membership only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	A Lot		0	0%
2	Some		2	67%
3	Little		0	0%
4	None		0	0%
5	I do not have any experience at eating clubs		1	33%
	Total		3	100%

25. How much will your decision whether or not to join an eating club be affected by how exclusive their policies are? (Asked of students not yet eligible for membership only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Definitely will not affect my decision		0	0%
2	Probably will not affect my decision		0	0%
3	Don't know		2	67%
4	Probably will affect my decision		1	33%
5	Definitely will affect my decision		0	0%
	Total		3	100%

26. How much will your decision whether or not to join an eating club be affected by their emphasis on alcohol, drugs and/or other party-related activity? (Asked of students not yet eligible for membership only)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Definitely will not affect my decision		1	33%
2	Probably will not affect my decision		0	0%
3	Don't know		0	0%
4	Probably will affect my decision		2	67%
5	Definitely will affect my decision		0	0%
	Total		3	100%

27. In what ways and/or at what events do you feel being [insert gender identity] has affected your experience in eating clubs? (This could be any instance you were on the premises of any of the clubs, any experience you have that you feel was affected by your gender identity.) (Asked of students not yet eligible for membership only)

Text Response

It's harder to get passes as a male.

Going to be accepted.

28. What is your age? (Asked of all respondents)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	18		1	4%
2	19		2	8%
3	20		4	15%
4	21		14	54%
5	22		4	15%
6	23		0	0%
7	24		0	0%
8	25		0	0%
9	26		0	0%
10	27+		1	4%
	Total		26	100%

29. What is your year in school? (Asked of all respondents)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	First-Year		1	4%
2	Sophomore		2	8%
3	Junior		3	12%
4	Senior		18	69%
5	Graduate		2	8%
	Total		26	100%

30. What is your primary racial identity? (Asked of all respondents)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Self-Identify:		26	100%
	Total		26	100%

Self-Identify:

White American

Asian American

Hispanic

White

White

African-American

indian

indian

Black

White

Caucasian

White

white

Asian

White

Asian

First-generation Chinese-American

White

White

Asian

White

White

indian -american

Caucasian

white

Caribbean Black

31. If any of the questions in this survey raised specific opinions that you hold, experiences that you've had, or any other general thoughts, please describe them below! (Asked of all respondents)

Text Response

My eating club and membership in it has been very important to me and a huge part of my Princeton experience. However, I was hosed and that experience was probably as bad as being in my eating club has been good. Very dichotomized, and may be interesting to keep in mind as an interesting conflict in how some may feel about eating clubs.

The reactions are clearly different between eating club to eating club, so perhaps you could section them off! It's very hard to make statements about one club here since every one is so diverse. Just a thought!

I definitely agree that the club system as a whole is inhospitable to women on a basic level, some clubs are much more hostile spaces for women. I would never consider joining a club with a overtly hostile attitude toward women, but I would consider joining other clubs, even though they, too, participate in a system that overall is unfriendly to women.

I think that eating clubs were fairly gender-neutral in regards to leadership and decision-making. But in regards to expectations, I think there was social pressure on women and men to socially behave in ways similar to fraternities. My experience with Terrace Club was that it was open to different ideas of gender, but surprisingly was also welcoming to people who had traditional gender views.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	4